

Zinovy Sheinis

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# MAXIM LITVINOV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN  
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МАКСИМ ЛИТВИНОВ

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### An Unavoidable Introduction

The generation of Russians born shortly before the Great October Socialist Revolution knew Maxim Maximovich Litvinov very well. He was rarely referred to by his surname, simply as Maxim Maximovich. Everyone knew who he was.

Factory workers, farmers, soldiers and generals, writers and scientists, just about everybody, would nod approvingly reading the transcript in the morning papers of a speech by the Foreign Affairs Commissar at a session of the USSR Supreme Soviet, in the League of Nations, at a disarmament conference or any other forum—always witty, always brilliantly constructed, stigmatising the enemies of peace and of the Soviet Union. And they said to each other, "Maxim Maximovich has again put up a good fight."

A member of the Communist Party since 1898, Maxim Litvinov belonged to Lenin's old guard, and had been exceedingly active in the twenty years before the October Revolution of 1917. In the name of the Revolution he never spared himself, but neither did he attach importance to that fact. Only Lenin knew about it, and a small group of old Bolsheviks.<sup>1</sup> Litvinov belonged to that nucleus of professional revolutionaries who had been distributors or, as they were then called, agents, of the *Iskra*, the Party's first own newspaper. He was one of those who bore the brunt of the struggle against the Mensheviks.<sup>2</sup> It was with these hardened cadres that Lenin led the Party out of its crisis in the hardest years of the struggle.

Very soon after the October Revolution, on Lenin's suggestion, Litvinov was appointed to top diplomatic offices, and held them thereafter for all of thirty years.

To the life of this man I have dedicated this book.

The first time I heard of Litvinov was in my early childhood. My mother came from Belostok, the town of Litvinov's birth. She had been friendly with his sister and a frequent guest at the Litvinov home. She never forgot the young man she met there who had "taken up revolution".

I made my acquaintance with Litvinov indirectly when reading

his brilliant speeches in the League of Nations and elsewhere. It was not until 1937 that I first saw and heard him. He had just returned from Geneva, and was asked to give a lecture to the staff of the Party's Central Committee. A few of the Moscow journalists who wrote on world affairs were invited, and among them I, then a neophyte newspaperman and still a student of the Communist Institute of Journalism.

I saw Litvinov again in 1940. At that time, I ran the world news department at *Trud*, the daily of the Soviet trade unions. I already knew some of the big lights of Soviet diplomacy closely associated with Litvinov. Early in 1940, *Trud* solicited contributions from a few former ambassadors, and I came to know Alexander Troyanovsky and Boris Stein, with both of whom I became friends, and then also other diplomats. My association with them benefited my paper, and me as well.

At first, we never spoke of Litvinov, although I was deeply interested in the life of the man who had fallen out of favour. Not until we got to know each other better would we now and then mention him in our conversations. And one summer evening, after a hard day's work at the editorial office, Boris Stein invited me for a walk. Along the way he said he was going to see Maxim Litvinov. As we approached Litvinov's house, we saw him from afar. A few other people were with him. I said good-bye and walked away. But Litvinov's stocky frame impregnated itself on my memory.

The Nazis attacked the Soviet Union in 1941, and like millions of my countrymen I joined the armed forces. After the war, I was assigned to the *Tägliche Rundschau*, a German-language Soviet daily appearing in Berlin. This gave me access to various archives, including those of the Nazi Foreign Ministry, and to the splendid Berlin University library. I found material there about Litvinov. Thus, new facts were added to what I knew from my prewar conversations with former officials of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs.

But a lot more had to be done before I could tackle the long since conceived plan of writing a book about Litvinov. Circumstances were not always favourable. Gradually, however, I gathered more material. Nor could I afford to lose time: many of those who were once associated with Litvinov, were passing away. I looked for and found some of the diplomats and Communist Party functionaries who had known him. Two of them I have already mentioned, and will name a few more, but to list all of them is simply impossible.

In those days I spoke with Yevgeni Gnedin, then chief of the Foreign Commissariat's Press Department, Ivan Maisky, Soviet Ambassador to Britain and Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Semyon

Mirny, a high-ranking foreign affairs adviser, Semyon Aralov, Soviet Ambassador to Turkey and other countries, Anastasia Petrova, who had been Litvinov's assistant for quite a number of years, Benedict Kozlovsky, Soviet Consul-General in Shanghai, China, Yuri Kozlovsky, Litvinov's personal secretary, Vladimir Barkov, a Party member since 1906 who was in charge of the Foreign Commissariat's Protocol Department, Nikolai Lyubimov, who took part in the Genoa Conference as a Foreign Commissariat expert, Anatoly Miller, another Foreign Commissariat expert who participated in many international conferences, and Vladimir Pavlov, government interpreter and member of the Foreign Commissariat's Collegium. Altogether, I had records of 96 conversations with Party functionaries and diplomats.

It had not always been easy to get people to talk, and still harder to obtain the desired material. Shades of the past were in the way. Sometimes, people met me with some distrust. "Oh, you want to write about Maxim Maximovich? Splendid idea! Very useful! But will you be able to? Besides, I don't remember a thing."

Gradually, however, a conversation would develop, and the panorama of Litvinov's life—revolutionary, diplomat and man, would unfold.

My talks with Lydia Fotiyeva, who had been Lenin's secretary from 1918 to 1924, was most instructive. She remembered Litvinov at sittings of the Council of People's Commissars when he had first returned from abroad. Tatiana Liudvinskaya, Party member since 1903, had been associated with Litvinov during his emigré years in Switzerland, and later also in Moscow. She was glad to tell me everything she could remember.

I also studied foreign sources. Bourgeois researchers had quite considerably distorted Litvinov's image. No few crude falsifications were put out about him, including *Notes for My Diary* ascribed to his pen. As Paul Blackstone, a former member of the U.S. secret service, revealed in the U.S. journal *Weekly Review*, however, the *Notes* were fabricated by a Grigory Besedovsky, who had defected from the Soviet Embassy in Paris in the late 1920s.

All the material had to be properly examined. It was not too difficult to refute the various fabrications, while Besedovsky's false little book was promptly exposed by the foreign press itself.

When my work was nearly completed, I asked Anastas Mikoyan<sup>3</sup> for his remembrances of Litvinov. My talks with him were exceedingly useful. And after reading my manuscript, Mikoyan agreed to write a foreword.

I also had a talk with Vyacheslav Molotov,<sup>4</sup> whom I asked of his opinion of Litvinov as a diplomat. He described him as one of the



greatest Soviet diplomats, but did so twenty years after Litvinov's death.

My stock of material increased, but I looked for more witnesses. Not only prominent personalities, but also those we describe as the rank and file. Nikolai Klimenkov, cipher clerk with the Soviet delegation at the Genoa Conference in 1922, was one such witness.

I had spent five years working on archives. At first I was told I would find nothing or next to nothing. But I made plentiful discoveries: I found valuable documents in the Central Party Archives of the CPSU Central Committee's Institute of Marxism-Leninism, the Central October Revolution State Archives, the Foreign Policy Archives of the USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and so on.

In 1964, I asked Litvinov's family to share their remembrances with me, and to show me whatever material they had at home. Initially, my request elicited very little enthusiasm. I was told they had nothing special to show me. But when the first few chapters of my future book were published in journals, I received a warm cable of thanks from Litvinov's widow and his children. Contact was thus established, raising the curtain on one of the most interesting periods of my research.

Gradually, week after week, old newspapers, purely personal documents that were thought inconsequential but were invaluable to me, were pulled out of cupboards, boxes, and other secluded spots. I spent evenings chatting with Ivy, Litvinov's widow, and his children Tatiana and Mikhail, and periods from the diplomat's life arose before me. Usually, our conversations ended with my asking if they had anything more.

"No, nothing more," was the usual answer. "Oh, yes, a photograph. It might be of interest..."

During our tea-drinking, which was usually in the kitchen, my attention was drawn to a built-in shelf-like cupboard beneath the ceiling. The lofts and attics of old villas, the basements of merchants' houses, and of abandoned buildings, always have a spell of mystery about them and to me that shelf held the same spell. One night, as our conversation had begun to flag, I finally asked Ivy if there could be something there. She laughed. No, there was nothing.

"Please, let me look."

"By all means—Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

I climbed on a stool, opened the door, pulled myself up and climbed onto the shelf. I crept along it. In the semidarkness, I saw it was filled with old things. I rummaged about, then jumped down to the floor with a basket that had caught my attention. There, under the bright light of the kitchen lamp, I discovered what the family called

Litvinov's personal file: his passport when he was secretary of the Bolshevik colony in London, a visiting card of the People's Ambassador of Soviet Russia to Britain, the sole extant copy of a book Litvinov had written in London, *The Bolshevik Revolution: Its Rise and Meaning*, proofs of a preface he had written on Lenin's request to the first Soviet Constitution, which he published in London in 1918, and clippings from British 1917 and 1918 newspapers, including a *Times* report about Maxim Litvinov, the prisoner of Brixton Gaol.

My meetings with Litvinov's family were spaced out over several years. I was given many interesting documents, and among them letters to his family during World War II, when Litvinov was Soviet Ambassador to the United States.

My book about Litvinov was completed in 1966. Editors of some central journals showed interest, and published a few chapters from it.

A few more fragments were published in 1968. Then came an interval of 18 years. Not until 1986 did matters begin to move again. One chapter after another was printed in the journal *Novaya i noveishaya istoriya* (of the USSR Academy of Sciences), and some fragments appeared in other journals.

I began receiving letters from Old Bolsheviks who had known Litvinov. Former diplomats and Party functionaries, and people of other occupations and age brackets telephoned me.

One evening, for example, a lady called who did not give her name. She only said she had read chapters of my book in various journals. She asked me to come and see her. A most pleasant surprise was in store for me when I did so. The lady was Vera Dudovskaya. Her mother, Rosalia Dudovskaya-Rosenzweig, had been Maxim Litvinov's messenger during the first Russian revolution of 1905.

"I still have Litvinov's letters to my mother," said Vera.

"Many?"

"About fifty, I think."

"Where are they?"

"Here. You can use them in your book."

There were decidedly more than 50 letters. Seventy-eight, in fact. Today, more than 80 years later, they shed additional light on the events of those times, and provided new details to the portrait of the then 30-year-old Maxim Litvinov.

Time had left its mark on them: it took a lot of painstaking work to decipher the faded writing in ink and pencil. I hope to write at length about these letters further on. Let me just say here that they helped me establish the geography of Litvinov's activity in those days.

The April 1986 Plenum of the CC CPSU and the Party's 27th Congress set the course on democratisation and glasnost. Books that had lain obscurely in the drawers of desks or on the shelves of repositories finally saw the light of day. The salutary changes also applied to my Litvinov manuscript. It has finally reached its readers.

Maxim Litvinov was a man of Lenin's mould, a patriot of the Soviet land, its herald and champion at all junctions of the struggle. He was a convinced anti-fascist and a no less convinced internationalist. And that is how I endeavoured to portray him. I have not been able, within the limits of this book, to produce as complete a portrait as I would wish. But I trust that time and life will add the finishing touches to it.

*Zinoviy Sheinis*

It was becoming ever more difficult for Litvinov to function. Though he was still People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs he noticed that a vacuum had gradually begun forming around him. On Stalin's instructions, Litvinov's deputy Potemkin published foreign policy articles in the journal *Bolshevik* and other mass media. The first Litvinov learned about them was when they appeared in print. New people were appointed to the Foreign Commissariat without his knowledge. It reached him that many Soviet ambassadors sent their reports over his head to Molotov. He learned that in some countries Soviet trade representatives doubled as ambassadors. David Kandelaki, for example, who was trade representative in Berlin, had for some time had direct contacts with Molotov on diplomatic matters.

Litvinov became aware that he was no longer able to change anything. He sat down and wrote his resignation. But doubts assailed him, and he put it in his safe. "How I would like to relax at the summer house for a few days," he wrote his wife in Sverdlovsk, where she was running a course of English.

He had no idea that soon he would have lots of time to relax—not a few days but years.

On April 27, 1939, Litvinov was summoned by Stalin. Though Stalin looked outwardly calm, he was obviously vexed. As for Molotov, who was present, he was simply vicious...

Early in the morning on May 4, the Foreign Commissariat building was encircled by troops of the Interior Commissariat. Molotov, Malenkov, and Beria, who arrived at dawn, informed Litvinov he was fired.

Around ten in the morning, Litvinov went to his countryhouse. He saw a platoon of soldiers guarding it. He called up Beria.

"Why this business with the guards?"

Beria giggled.

"You're much too valuable. We must guard your precious person."

A few days after the above, an ukase appeared in the papers, relieving Litvinov of his job. The reaction all over the world was one



of dismay. Urgent cabinet meetings were called to discuss the situation. A sharp turn was expected in Soviet foreign policy.

Von Ribbentrop flew in to Moscow on August 23, and signed a non-aggression pact. In the evening, Chaikovsky's "Swan Lake" with Galina Ulanova in the lead, was shown at the Bolshoi. Litvinov, accompanied as usual by guards, went to see it. This was his first appearance in public after the dismissal. Shortly before the curtain rose, Molotov and Ribbentrop appeared in the government box. The orchestra played the German national anthem and the Internationale. Everybody stood. Litvinov did not. There were acquaintances all round, but none dared speak to him. Not until the last interval, when Nina Mirnaya, wife of the removed Soviet diplomat Semyon Mirny, came up and said hello. Litvinov observed: "You're a brave woman!"

Some time later, Litvinov's membership of the Central Committee of the Communist Party was terminated at a plenary meeting. A tense silence fell. Stalin was intent on not letting Litvinov speak. But as many times before in his life, Litvinov simply walked to the rostrum and had his say. He said, among other things, that it was possible to delay, if not avoid, a war. Though Germany meant to attack the Soviet Union. Then he said there were hardly any Old Bolsheviks on the Central Committee, and without him there would be one less. The number of Mensheviks, on the other hand, was rising, one of them being Andrei Vyshinsky.

Litvinov spoke for ten minutes. The hall listened in silence. Molotov alone made heckling remarks. Stalin, puffing on his pipe, walked slowly up and down the stage. When Litvinov finished, Stalin spoke. Sharply, he rejected everything Litvinov had said. When he stopped, Litvinov faced him and asked:

"Does this mean you consider me an enemy of the people?"

Stalin stopped in his stride, and said, spacing his words:

"We do not consider you an enemy of the people. You were an honest revolutionary..."

At that very time, in Beria's office, Yevgeni Gnedin, chief of the Foreign Commissariat's press department, was being interrogated. Beria and Kobulov, one of his deputies, sat on either side of Gnedin and played what they called "pendulum", hitting the man who sat between them on the side of the head with their fists. They kept hitting and hitting to make Gnedin testify against Litvinov.

Gnedin kept blacking out, was revived, and the beating continued. His mouth bleeding profusely, he said for the n'th time: "No, no, no. Litvinov is straight, a faithful son of the Communist Party and the people."

After Litvinov's resignation, indeed, mass media all over the world, along with statesmen and public leaders, speculated about his future. To this day, people marvel at how he had survived the grim years of the Stalinist repressions.

Since speculation continues, an answer is called for. Especially now, when in the setting of glasnost, blank spots in the history of the Soviet land are swiftly disappearing.

Certainly, Litvinov was immensely popular across the country, and small wonder, considering his revolutionary record and diplomatic career. But there must have been other reasons.

For Litvinov, meanwhile, the dreary months of enforced inactivity dragged on and on. He spent most of the time in the country. Walking in the woods he analysed the swift succession of world events. But surely, sometimes his thoughts must have turned to the past, to the times before the October Revolution, to his emigré days in Geneva, Paris, London...

# The Making of a Revolutionary



## Chapter I

### AN AGENT OF THE ISKRA

A secret police circular dated August 21, 1902\* instructed police chiefs at all levels, and particularly all border guards, to capture "those most dangerous criminals, and have them transported under close guard to Siberia".

The Russian police was after a group of revolutionaries who had escaped from a Kiev fortress-prison. The escape was so daring that even experienced gendarmes, all the kingpins of the secret police, were speechless with rage.

Small wonder. No political prisoner had escaped from that prison in the previous 24 years. The last escape was in 1878—by Lev Deutsch, Jan Stefanovich, and Ivan Bakhnovsky—members of southern rebel groups who tried starting a peasant uprising in Chigirin Uyezd.

Would the police manage to recapture the latest lot?

A list of the *Iskra*<sup>5</sup> agents and their description was sent to all police stations across the country. The fifth on the list was Max Wallach, "a reserve army private of the second grade, townsman of Belostok, Grodno Gubernia, born on July 4, 1876, Hebrew, educated in Jewish schools in Belostok".

Max Wallach, his description said, was implicated in the case of a subversive printing plant and storage of seditious literature put out by a secret society that called itself the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party. The police described Wallach as red-haired, of average height and sound constitution, clean-shaven, blue-eyed, short-sighted, round-faced, and dark-complexioned.

Since that August day of 1902, the name of Max Wallach never ceased to figure in secret police dispatches for the next 15 years. He was sought by Russia's Internal Affairs Ministry, the Police Department, the Special Branch, an army of police spies, chief of Russian police agents abroad Harting, and Russian agents in Paris, Vienna, Prague, Sofia, and other European capitals. At different times, he was sought as an agent of the *Iskra*, an agent of the Central Commit-

\*All dates up to February 1, 1918, are in the Old Style.

tee of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party, as chief gun-runner aiming to organise an armed insurrection in Russia, and as head of Bolshevik emigrés in London. The police knew his Party aliases: Papasha, Felix, and Ginger. But there were many more: Count, Louvinier, Kuznetsov, Latyshev, Felix, Theophilia, Maximovich, Harrison, and Kazimir.

He has gone down in history under his most lasting alias, one that became his regular surname—Litvinov.

Like many other young people of his generation, Litvinov joined the revolutionary movement at the end of the 19th century. It was the century that had witnessed the Decembrist uprising, the killing of Pushkin and Lermontov, countless peasant disturbances, the first workers' strikes, and the unexampled heroism of Russian soldiers at Borodino, Sevastopol and Shipka, it was a century that began in the reign of Tsar Paul I, a sadist who was himself strangled in his bedroom, and ended with the rioting in Khodynka Field<sup>6</sup> in Moscow, that bloody prelude to the inglorious reign of Tsar Nicholas II, the last of the house of the Romanovs.

Russia had come to the edge of world-shaking events. The Narodnik movement had exhausted itself. At the turn of the 20th century, Lenin described it as totally barren. Revolutionary Marxism was capturing the minds of the workers. Speaking of the situation in Russia, Lenin wrote proudly in the first issue of *Iskra* that the Russian workers' struggle of the five or six previous years had shown the enormous revolutionary potential of the working class. It had shown that the ruthless government reprisals tended to increase, rather than dampen, the workers' aspirations to socialism, to political consciousness, and political struggle.

The battle of ideas also reached provincial Belostok. The local multilingual intelligentsia recited Nadson's violently emotive poetry, passed round postcards of Sofia Perovskaya<sup>7</sup> and Andrei Zhelyabov,<sup>8</sup> and read timid monologues against tyrants at secret homeside recitals. The workers in Belostok's textile factories warred with their employers, objected to the ruinous fines, and demanded increases of their miserably low wages, chased out overseers, and beat up police spies.

The large Jewish population employed in the factories was the nucleus of the petty-bourgeois Bund<sup>9</sup> in the west of Russia. But gradually, towards the end of the century, the revolutionary Social-Democrats gained a grip on the minds of most people in Belostok.

Quite inevitably, revolutionary ideas also reached into the home of the petty bank employee Wallach, father of three daughters and four sons, among them Maxim.

In the Central Party Archives of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism I found a scrap of grey paper on which someone had scribbled Litvinov's biography. Judging by the note on the margin, it was written for Grigory Lelevich, literary critic and poet who was subsequently editor of the journal *Na literaturnom postu*. A few emendations in the text were made in Litvinov's hand. Here is what the biography said: "Educated in a secondary school. While in the army (as volunteer) he studied socio-economic matters, read Karl Marx, and joined the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party as a propagandist."

Soon, Litvinov left Belostok. He did not particularly care where he went. He heard that a factory in Klintsi, Chernigov Gubernia, was looking for an accountant. And though he had not the slightest idea of how to keep books, he thought he would give it a try. In Klintsi he managed to borrow a manual on bookkeeping, and finally ventured to offer his services, and was taken on.

But more important things had to be done. There were several large factories in Klintsi, making cloth and leather, and processing hemp. A propagator of Social-Democracy had more than enough things to do in that little town founded in the 18th century by Old Believers.<sup>10</sup> In the year that he spent in Klintsi, Litvinov organised secret gatherings and readings of banned books, and taught the basics of political knowledge.

In 1899, he moved to Kiev, where he was made member of the Kiev Committee of the RSDLP.

His Kiev period was not long—just three years, out of which half were spent in jail. Police reports of that period give a good idea of what he had done, speaking at factories and public meetings, setting up a secret printing plant, and writing and distributing leaflets against the autocracy. Among the hundreds of reports in the police files, I found this one:

"According to available information ... Wallach attended a gathering held on March 18, 1901, in the house of defendant Marshak where a manifesto of the Southern Workers Party was read aloud. Two thousand copies of it were to be printed and distributed in Kiev."

The informer was a Black Hundreder<sup>11</sup> who was glad to supply the police with a copy of the leaflet and attached a long letter warning of "the grave danger to the lives of His Imperial Highness the Emperor, the Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich, and His Excellency, Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod, Mr. Pobedonostsev".

"Comrades," the leaflet said, "join our ranks of workers fighting for their rights; read our leaflets, newspapers and books; pass them on to others. More workers must awaken to their interests. More workers



must fight for their rights. All workers cannot be tucked away in prison."

Some copies of the leaflet were picked up in the streets and forwarded to the gendarmes. Arrests began. One of the prisoners broke under torture and provided information about the local Social-Democratic leaders.

At the end of April 1901, Litvinov was arrested together with the other members of the Kiev RSDLP Committee. He landed in prison.

He was 24 at the time. Behind him were four years of underground revolutionary work, four years of sleepless nights, four years of escaping from police raids, four years of organising secret quarters, printing seditious leaflets, and setting up Social-Democratic cells in Klintsi and Kiev factories.

His father, who had died in the meantime, had never tried to stop his son's revolutionary activity. He knew it was hopeless. Besides, his son was hardly ever at home. Even as a schoolboy he was often out, seeing visiting revolutionaries or reading banned books.

Policemen were frequent callers at the Wallach home. "Where's your son?" The mother would shrug her shoulders in fright: "I have no idea. What do you have on him?" The policemen would be given a glass of vodka and a rouble, which they nimbly hid in the cuff of their sleeves, and went away, only to reappear a few days later. His mother and sisters came to see Max at the Kiev Prison. That was the last time son and mother would see each other.

Litvinov's letters censored by the secret police provided a few facts about that period of his life. Some passages were written in code.

In prison, Litvinov learned about the existence of the newspaper *Iskra*, which was being put out by Lenin. Friends from outside provided details about the *Iskra* programme; so did every new lot of political prisoners. And Litvinov made an option that shaped the rest of his political life: he became an *Iskra*-ite.

Here are his recollections of those days:

"In prison, by devious means, we got newspapers and even underground literature from abroad. Words fail me to describe the joyous excitement that gripped us on receiving the first issues of the *Iskra*. The tasks, and the ways of the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat as formulated in them with the maximum clarity, and the merciless war against economism—all this was in keeping with our mood, our thoughts and aspirations. It opened up new horizons and generated a lust for work, a lust for struggle, and a desire to regain our freedom and join the new *Iskra* movement."

Not to waste time, Litvinov began learning foreign languages. He pored over textbooks brought to him from outside, for he did not

expect to stay too long in prison. This was clear from his letters to Dora Bergman, sent through trustworthy people. It is hard to say who Dora Bergman was. Litvinov never met her in person. She had left Russia and settled in Switzerland. His letters from the Kiev prison reached her at 9 Vogelsangstrasse, Zurich. (A few years later Dora would do secret work on Litvinov's instructions.) "There are 74 of us in prison at present," he wrote to her. "A motley crowd—from *Iskra*-ites down to a former criminal accused of arousing the peasants. He is a most suspicious character."

Litvinov was eager to receive news about the Party. Three years had passed since its first congress, but the Party could hardly be said to have crystallised organisationally. In many towns, RSDLP organisations were left to fend for themselves. Many did not even attempt to start a political struggle. They figured it was enough to make economic demands. After all, the first congress<sup>12</sup> was held without Lenin, who was then in Siberian exile. Only now, at the turn of the century, was the Party on the way to political action. The *Iskra* was a splendid guide, but many things were still unclear. The new paper had enemies. The time had come to look into everything, to try and understand. But it was first essential to regain his freedom.

In those July days Litvinov was preparing an escape. An unsigned note was attached to a letter to Dora Bergman, written almost completely in code. The secret police was convinced the letter was from Litvinov. Some policeman added "M. Wallach" at the end of the attached note. And he was right. In his next letter Litvinov wrote: "Ten days ago I sent you a coded letter. Did you get it? The word 'Australia' will be our code from now on. When you write to me, make sure the gendarmes can't guess who is writing and to whom if the letter falls into their hands... Sorry to make you waste time on decoding. At first glance, it may seem superfluous, but I cannot write any other way. I feel fine, I dream of freedom, and soon my dream will either come true or shatter completely."

Quite obviously, the letter was not decoded by the police until after the *Iskra*-ites had made good their escape. How the escape had been prepared, the police in St. Petersburg and Kiev learned much later. The police department reported that it had received information from its agents abroad that emigré revolutionaries said the League of Social-Democrats (*Iskra* and *Zarya*) had decided to help all the more important *Iskra*-ites in Russian prisons to escape. It had picked out 11 persons whose freedom was most important in the League's opinion, and made passports for them.

The escape was planned by the *Iskra* Bureau in Russia, the newspa-

per's editors, and, of course, the prisoners themselves. Litvinov was chosen chief, for he was a resolute man and of great physical strength—a most important factor.

The report of the Kiev Governor-General to the Minister of Internal Affairs in St. Petersburg, dated August 21, 1902, traced the escape preparations. "Some of the political prisoners in the Kiev prison," the Governor-General wrote, "had some two months ago, that is, in June, requested the acting inspector of prisons in the presence of Chief Warden Malitsky to let them have their daily walks in the hospital yard because swill carts made the prison yard unfit for walking, or else let them stay out a little longer, until dusk.

"The Inspector turned down their request categorically, but told the wardens not to let any swill carts cross the yard when political prisoners were having their walk.

"Chief warden Malitsky took it upon himself, however, to let political prisoners stay in the prison yard until 9 p.m. in order to avoid unpleasantness. Similarly, he permitted prisoners in the political corridors to communicate freely among themselves."

It follows from the above that the Iskra-ites were able to discuss and set the final date of the escape. Whatever they needed was sent in by friends from outside. On the outside, the escape was stage-managed by Dora Dvoires, a member of the Kiev RSDLP organisation. A grappling-iron was smuggled in inside a basket of flowers on the occasion of a prisoner's "birthday". Bed sheets were to be used instead of ropes, and there was the requisite amount of vodka to get the wardens drunk.

The police version of the escape, as submitted to the Minister of Internal Affairs, was fairly accurate:

"On August 18 at 8.15 p.m., when it was getting dark, some 20 political prisoners from different corridors were in the prison yard on the right. A few men approached the unsuspecting guard, Trofim Overchenko, and jumped on him before he could utter a sound. They flung him to the ground, put a rope round his neck, and covered his head with a blanket. They also gagged him, and in so doing injured his lips and cheek. The others threw a grappling-iron with a rope ladder over the wall, whereupon 11 prisoners ... scaled the wall and jumped down on the other side, making good their escape. Then, the prisoners holding Overchenko let him go and went to their cells. Overchenko fired into the air, and the acting deputy chief warden, Sulima, followed by other wardens, rushed to the spot at once."

The shot fired by the frightened Overchenko did not help. In a panic, Sulima reported the escape to his superiors. The Kiev gendarmerie did its best to catch the fugitives and, naturally, cabled St.

Petersburg. A thorough search was made of the neighbourhood, but none of the fugitives was found. The authorities decided that they would try to cross the border. Frontier guards were ordered to redouble their vigilance. "Be good enough," said a coded message to a gendarmerie officer on the frontier, "to intensify the search for suspicious persons trying to leave Russia. Arrest them if you have any doubts about their identity."

Similar coded messages were sent to all border posts on the western frontier and to the authorities in 295 towns of the Russian Empire.

The gendarmes were in too much of a hurry. Litvinov and his companions had no intention of crossing the frontier on the same day or the next. They did so a fortnight after the prison break.

Litvinov revealed these facts in March 1951, at a meeting on the 50th anniversary of the *Iskra*. According to the escape plan, none of the fugitives was to stay in the city overnight in view of the probable raids. Each was to pick his own route. Litvinov and another three comrades were to leave Kiev by boat along the Dnieper that same night. The boat waited for them at the prearranged place. But they had to change their plan.

He had lowered himself by a rope, Litvinov said, and started to run, but after a few steps fell into a gully in the darkness and stumbled upon a human body. The man was gasping for breath and could barely state his name. It was Blumenfeld, one of the fugitives, who had a heart attack and was unable to move. Litvinov could not leave a comrade in that helpless state. He tried carrying him, but soon found he was too heavy. Besides, Litvinov had injured his arm in negotiating the prison wall. All he and Blumenfeld could do was lie low and wait. They heard the prison warden's shot. People were running, and horses were galloping by. Two long hours passed until the pursuers returned. The curses and exclamations were clear evidence that none of the fugitives was caught.

In the meantime, Blumenfeld recovered. They decided to start out. But where were they to go? They had missed the boat: the prearranged time had long since passed. Cautiously, on all fours, they crept across an empty lot, finally reaching a city street. Their appearance was anything but respectable, for it had rained at night and they had muddied their clothes. They pretended to be drunk, stumbling from side to side, and singing. A cabby offered his services. They got into his cab and said he could take them anywhere as long as they could get a drink. He brought them to a suspicious-looking inn, where they dropped on to the closest bench and pretended to fall asleep.

On leaving the inn, Litvinov and Blumenfeld went to a bathhouse.



Here they washed up, brushed their clothes, and went to another bathhouse. All day long, in fact, they wandered from bathhouse to bathhouse. Then, for something like a fortnight, they hid out in a rented room, risking to be betrayed by the landlady. Finally, on a dark night, Litvinov and his companion walked out of the city and crossed fields and woods to reach Zhitomir Highway. At the nearest railway station they boarded a train for Wilno.\* They had a Wilno address where they could go to ground. A smuggler promised to take them across the border. Litvinov recalled later that they got off a train at some tiny stop and continued on horseback to a little village on the frontier. There they hid in haystacks for a day and a night. One of their companions, a young man who had his eyes on them all the time, aroused their suspicions. They feared he was a police spy who would seize them so close to freedom. Finally, after nightfall, the smuggler suggested that they walk some distance on foot. Then they were told to run, and, finally, they heard the smuggler's happy exclamation that the border had been crossed. They were in Prussian territory and could, if they wished, have a glass of bread wine in the nearby pub. All of them had a drink, and Blumenfeld, who was a teetotaler, also swallowed a glass and was instantly drunk.

Soon after the escape, the chief of the Grodno gendarmerie reported to his superiors that his agents had intercepted three of Litvinov's letters to his mother from abroad.

The letters were very short, but showed what the young Iskra-ite experienced after his escape.

One of the letters was dated September 10 and was mailed in Stanupenel:

"You were probably informed from Lodz how I departed from the prison and Russia (not forever). You must therefore know some of the details. I had a hard time physically and morally—harder than ever before. But days of rest are near. For all of ten days I experienced fear of a military tribunal for attempting to escape. But now I am out of danger. Forgive me for writing only a short letter, because I am fagged out. I'll write again from Berlin or Switzerland."

The next letter was dated September 11, and was posted in Berlin.

"My dear folks, have just arrived in Berlin and haven't rested yet. So far I'm happy. Are you? Goodbye. I'll write about my plans in two or three days. Kisses, your Max."

The letter also had a date written in by the police: September 14-18.

The third letter:

\* Wilno, now Vilnius, capital of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic.

"My dears, here's letting you know that I am well and safe. The three days in Berlin have been very tiring. Now, I am leaving. Can't promise that I'll write until I come to Switzerland and have a bit of a rest. Yours, Max."

This letter Litvinov wrote at a Berlin railway station. An hour later he boarded the train for Switzerland. The 3rd class car was noisy and crowded. One landlord estate after another flashed by outside. He saw the tiled roofs of tidy little houses, the baron manors, and the castles of medieval knights.

The *Iskra* man in Berlin advised Litvinov and Blumenfeld to go straight to Switzerland, not stop anywhere. He knew the Russian secret police had close ties with the police in Berlin. He feared the fugitives might be detained. But freedom was an intoxicating thing. Litvinov's energy brimmed over. He was eager to see everything, to make up for lost time. From the papers, he learned that the German Social-Democrats were holding a congress in Munich. August Bebel was sure to be there. So Litvinov and Blumenfeld got off the train and went straight to the congress. The two Russian revolutionaries were given a rousing reception.

Litvinov reached Zurich thoroughly worked up and spoiling for a fight. A few days later, the rest of the Iskra-ites arrived. The prison, the escape, crossing the border, and the eventful travel, were all forgotten. There was no end to their joy. They gathered in a restaurant beside the Schaffhausen Falls on the Rhine, and celebrated their safe escape. In the end, they sent a sarcastic telegram to General Novitsky, chief of the Kiev gendarmerie, who had sworn publicly he would destroy all Iskra-ites. The first to sign the telegram was the chief of the escape, Maxim Litvinov.

At the turn of the century, the working-class movement in Russia received a powerful guide to action, Lenin's book *What Is to Be Done?*. The book's impact and significance was that it refuted the idea of the workers' confining themselves to fighting exclusively for higher wages, and that it laid the ideological foundation for a Bolshevik party.

Detailed elaboration of revolutionary theory blended in Lenin's book with meticulous care for good organisation. In the autumn of 1901 in Geneva, Lenin took part in establishing the League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Democracy Abroad. It embraced the Social-Democrat organisation, and the foreign departments of the *Iskra* and *Zarya*. As conceived by Lenin, the League was to supervise the distribution of the *Iskra* and *Zarya*, and to train leaders for the Russian revolutionary working-class movement.

The colony of Russian emigrés in Zurich lived very frugally. They rented the cheapest possible digs, their earnings were casual and miserly, and quite often they went hungry. Some broke under the strain and gave up politics for good. The *Iskra*-ites were the most tenacious. And Litvinov was one of them. He was put in charge of the secret meeting places in Zurich and of the distribution of the *Iskra*. A member of the League's foreign administration, it was up to him to receive revolutionaries who had escaped from tsarist Russia, to maintain the secret hiding places, and to keep in touch with representatives of the *Iskra* outside Russia.

Such was the beginning of Litvinov's activity as *Iskra* agent. In September 1902, Nadezhda Krupskaya sent Iosif Basovsky, one of the Kiev fugitives, Lenin's project of how to organise the transportation of the *Iskra*. Under this plan, an *Iskra* transportation office would be in charge of shipping the paper and other literature to Russia, and also of smuggling in Party workers. Very soon a conference of *Iskra* agents was convened (most probably in Geneva), where Maxim Litvinov was unanimously elected secretary of Transport Groups Abroad, of which Lenin was duly informed.

In the autumn of 1902, the *Iskra* was printed in London and shipped to Zurich. From there it had to be smuggled into Russia. A large number of copies was mailed "legally" to St. Petersburg, Moscow, and other cities, with the addresses, including those of persons in high places, being supplied by *Iskra* agents. Copies of the *Iskra* were also given to travellers going to Russia legally. Some were hidden in secret compartments within heels of shoes and boots, but most frequently beneath the lining of specially designed jackets that took a considerable number of copies. Many copies were sent to Social-Democratic organisations overland through the services of professional smugglers. Here is how Litvinov described this:

"Literature was first posted from Switzerland to some large city in Germany or Austria, say Berlin, Leipzig or Vienna, and from there to the border towns of Tilsit, Memel, Gusiatin, and the like. It was addressed to some German Social-Democrat, who turned it over in suitcases to a professional smuggler. The latter's job was to bribe the border guards and carry the suitcases across. In the nearest village or town they were picked up by comrades in charge of transport on the Russian side. Here is where the most difficult and the riskiest part began. Most of the failures occurred at this stage: one could run into border guards, who looked with suspicion at all freights at every step, at every crossing. Besides, there were guards at all railway stations in the large border zone."

Letters and other evidence tell the story of *Iskra*-ites active in the

border zones. They convey the flavour of the times and tell of simple deeds in their way heroic.

Here's a letter to Litvinov dated September 28, 1903, posted by an *Iskra* agent named Markov in the little border town of Schwindt:

"I am stuck on the border the past three days, and have changed three or four houses. They keep me a day, milk me of my money, and pass me on to the next address. Just when I think I've found the man who'll take me across, he says he must hand me on to another, and that one to yet another, and so on. A German passed me on to a Lithuanian, and the Lithuanian to another Lithuanian. I spent a day and a night with him, until he said they could not take me across because my clothes would give me away... So I left. Now I've found a Jew. Seems my troubles are over. But since I can't be sure I'll cross safely, I want you to know a few things..."

After the Party's Second Congress<sup>13</sup> the struggle between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks grew sharper still. It was doubly important, therefore, that every issue of the *Iskra* should reach its readers in Russia. By order of the Central Committee, Litvinov tried sending the *Iskra* in via Austria. But here, too, the difficulties were immense.

The *Iskra* people had no money. The workers in Russia contributed whatever coppers they could spare. The German Social-Democrats helped out now and then. Now and then, too, foreign friends contributed a little something to the Party's cashbox. But often enough *Iskra* agents asking for money would have to be told there was none.

Litvinov kept the *Iskra*'s accounts himself, keeping track of every spent rouble, franc, or mark, and wondering constantly where he could scrape up a little more.

You ought to see those time-yellowed pages from the *Iskra* account book: received 200 + 20 + 20 + 10 + 60 + 10, and so forth. Wretchedly little. While the expenses were often big. Litvinov put down everything—how much he issued, and to whom: 60 roubles for the *Iskra* agents' boots, fares 360, Veniamin 5, Semyon's crossing 5, compositor Andrei 6, Ilya who escaped from Suvalki 16, Abram 10, comrades in transit 22, maps 5, packing 61, and so on, with the debit adding up to 1,780 roubles. Also attached was Pyotr's note on how much he had spent transporting literature in November—down to a kopeck, or centime, or pfennig. And a similar note from Miron, also dated November. Attached, too, were detailed accounts of how many copies of what publication had been sent to Odessa, Yekaterinoslav, Yelisavetgrad, Poltava, Nikolayev, Kremenchug, Moscow, and Kiev.

On October 12, 1903, Litvinov wrote a note to one of the *Iskra* subscribers and distributors: "Please, let me know on what terms you



are getting our literature (15 copies of the *Iskra*) and how much you owe us."

Exactly. How much? The price of 15 copies wasn't to be sneezed at. Because money was scarce. And it was not surprising at all that he told off an agent who had arranged a route without the Zurich centre's knowledge:

"Dear Comrade, have just received your cable. My reply: we cannot send you money. You should have known that from my previous letters. I don't know who authorised Demyan to make arrangements and then come here for money. What surprises me is that people think we abroad can have as much money as we want. Why send people to the border thinking they'll get money the moment they ask for it...

"We've sent you 150 franks through Dora to pay your debts... But where is she? A real mix-up with her whereabouts. Let us know, please, how much more you owe and how much you need to straighten things out with literature in Lemberg.\*

"Tell Galitsiisky copies of the *Iskra* for the Revolutionary Ukrainian Party are being sent to Galkevich (Mikola) in Lemberg."

The *Iskra* was also mailed to places outside Russia. There were *Iskra* representatives in many European countries. Apparently, there was much interest in the Balkans. Litvinov was in close touch with Georgy Bakalov, a Bulgarian writer and revolutionary, who kept a Party bookshop in Varna and a network of *Iskra* outlets elsewhere inside and outside Bulgaria. The main base, however, was in Varna, from where literature was forwarded to other points, notably Odessa.

Here is one of Litvinov's letters from Geneva to Bakalov in Varna, dated June 5, 1903:

"Dear Comrade, have sent you the following pamphlets: *What the Social-Democrats Are After*, *Stories from the History of the French Revolution*, and *Songs of the Revolution*.

"I have a request. At the end of 1902, Georgiev said we should let him be general sales agent in the Balkans for the *Iskra*, *Zarya*, and our other publications. We consented...

"Please, let us know of some convenient bookshop that would agree to sell our publications in Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, and Montenegro."

The routes of the *Iskra* in the Balkans may well be traced by Litvinov's letters to Bakalov and other Bulgarian revolutionaries.

The *Iskra*-ites had a sea route as well: Marseilles-Alexandria-Odessa. They had had it since 1901. Pyotr Smidovich, a Russian revolutionary expelled from Russia and living in Montpellier near Marseilles, who

\* Lemberg—the Austrian name for Lvov.

had spent years in France, had been in Belgium before and was closely acquainted with some French trade union leaders, was the intermediary between Litvinov and the French seamen who took along shipments of literature.

A succession of agents passed the *Iskra* and other literature down the line for shipment to Batum and other Black Sea ports. Books and newspapers were placed in hermetically sealed rubber containers, which were tied to the stern and lowered into the water.

In transit ports, the *Iskra* organisation had numerous willing helpers. The literature was carried not only in French ships, but also in Russian vessels working the Marseilles-Odessa line. The most frequently mentioned steamers were *Alexandre Dumas*, *Anatolia*, *Memphis*, *Syracuse*, and *Mingrelia*.

But not all shipments reached their destination. The St. Petersburg police, which had learned of the sea route, tried to paralyse it. At the end of August 1903, Litvinov received an alarming letter from Marseilles. The *Iskra* agent there, a man named Kokobadze, wrote: "This letter is a bearer of ill tidings. A 300-kilo shipment to Batum was seized aboard the ship by company spies last night. Three men were fired. I don't know if they'll manage to recover the literature. I'll do my best to help them. Halt further shipments to Marseilles..."

But the police reprisals could not stop the Marseilles-Odessa operation. A steady stream of Bolshevik literature flowed to Russia from France by the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Lenin's writings reached Russia safely bypassing the roadblocks.

The Mensheviks sought to gain control of the *Iskra* politically and administratively. The chief of the *Iskra* printshop in Geneva at that time was Blumenfeld, the man who had been Litvinov's companion in the daring escape from the Kiev prison. After the Party's Second Congress, he sided with the Mensheviks. This meant that the *Iskra* plant might fall completely into the hands of Lenin's opponents. So the Bolsheviks decided to put Litvinov in charge of the printing as well as distribution in Geneva.

This occurred in late September 1903 and led to an unpleasant incident between Litvinov and Blumenfeld. Litvinov recalled it at the *Iskra* jubilee celebrations fifty years later, saying that the incident was typical of the Mensheviks.

The episode is described at length by V.D. Bonch-Bruyevich and Pavel Andriyevich in a communication to the Party's Central Committee of September 30, 1903. "On September 28," they reported, "we came to the Party's printshop in Geneva to see Comrade Litvinov on business. The three of us retired to the editorial room. At 6.40 p.m., after a heated conversation with Comrade Litvinov, Comrade

Blumenfeld locked all three of us in, and departed, taking the key along. Not until 55 minutes later did we regain our freedom by unscrewing the lock of one of the doors with a screwdriver that a compositor threw us through the window. On the following day, both of us received identical letters from Comrade Blumenfeld, apologising for what he had done. It was clear from the letters that he had meant to lock in Comrade Litvinov alone, because he writes that he had forgotten we were in the room as well. We consider Comrade Blumenfeld's action, especially in relation to Comrade Litvinov, extremely improper and beyond the limits of permissible friction between comrades of one and the same political party. Though we are satisfied with his apologies to us, we consider it our duty to raise the matter with the Central Committee. Since we find that this action against a person in an administrative Party capacity discredits the principles on which our Party is run, and since we consider Comrade Blumenfeld's behaviour a breach of Party discipline, we, who had been present at the incident, beg the Central Committee to look into the matter and state its opinion."

A specially set up commission condemned Blumenfeld's behaviour.

After the printshop incident, the ways of Litvinov and Blumenfeld parted for good. A few months later, Litvinov was dispatched to Russia to do underground work.

He handed over his affairs in Geneva to other comrades, and was supplied a new passport. The way home was dangerous and difficult. He went to Berlin first, then to Vienna. The final leg from Austria to Russia, however, lay past countless police checkpoints.

The night before his departure, Litvinov spent a few hours walking along the shore of the Lake of Geneva and the Rhone embankment farther and farther up into the hills. Who knew how long he would be free? It was already spring in Switzerland. The Alpine meadows were abloom.

Tsarist police agents abroad kept a close watch over Litvinov. They had learned that he was planning to leave Switzerland. What they did not know was how and where he intended to cross the frontier into Russia. On March 8, 1904, the chief of police sent a coded telegram to all border posts in Western Russia: "The wanted Max Wallach has left Berlin for Vienna on March 6, and plans to cross into Russia illegally. Redouble your vigilance."

The police report was a little premature. Litvinov was detained in Berlin on Party business. Now he was watched by Harting, chief of Russian police spies abroad. On March 19, the latter reported to St. Petersburg that Litvinov had that day left for Vienna and intended to go on to Russia illegally. But none of the policemen knew where

he would cross the frontier. New messages were sent posthaste to all points on the border to apprehend Litvinov at any cost and send him to St. Petersburg under guard.

Too late. By then Litvinov was already in Russia. On March 2, 1904 (New Style) Nadezhda Krupskaya sent Litvinov a coded message from Geneva to Minsk, informing him that Minsk, Gomel, and Novozybkov would henceforth come under the Party's Polessye Committee. Here is the text of the letter:

"Dear friend, do you happen to know that Minsk comes under the Polessye Committee? Gomel and Novozybkov, too. Both towns are asking for people and literature, with work going on exclusively among Russian workers. Gomel has even agreed with the Bund that it would not touch the Jewish workers, though it did make the following reservation, 'owing to local conditions'. This is absurd. If resources were lacking, it would be more sensible to give up all work in the district rather than enter into an intolerable agreement. For it means accepting the division into Jewish and Russian workers, accepting the Bund's point of view. Since you are stuck in Minsk, visit Gomel and Novozybkov at once, and then move south as quickly as possible for there's plenty of work there and the shortage in people is appalling."

A new stage began in Litvinov's revolutionary career. He became a full-fledged Bolshevik undergrounder in tsarist Russia.



## Chapter 2

### UNDERGROUND IN RUSSIA

Early in the 20th century the Russian armies were defeated in the Russo-Japanese war in Manchuria, and the Russian navy, considered unconquerable, was sunk.

The decay, stupidity and wretchedness of the governing elite, the immorality of the ruling dynasty, and the corruption of the government—all this now came to the surface in frighteningly bold relief. Nothing could be concealed, nothing could be window-dressed. Everything was denuded: the tsarist system showed all its faults for the world to see.

Russia was seething. It thirsted for change. It was fraught with revolution.

After the Second Congress of the RSDLP, the revolutionary movement was making good headway. Economism, the idea of fighting for the workers' economic demands only, had been ideologically crushed. But not all the Social-Democratic organisations in Russia were militant enough. Litvinov was one of those whose job it was to propagate the Bolsheviks' ideas.

The Central Committee instructed Litvinov to settle in the western regions. He was in touch with local Party organisations there, and knew local conditions well.

Nadezhda Krupskaya had asked him to visit Novozybkov. The Bolsheviks in that town had a good base. The *Iskra* editors had connections with Fyodor Gubarev, owner of a Novozybkov bookshop. Litvinov had corresponded with him from Zurich, and had supplied him copies of the *Iskra* from abroad. Gubarev had been a faithful distributor, and, naturally, Litvinov lost no time to find him and other Novozybkov Bolsheviks.

I have managed to trace the routes followed by Central Committee envoys at that time. Certainly, Litvinov did not sit on his hands. In the spring of 1904, he went to the south of Russia. From there he went to the Baltic states. In Riga, he was elected member of the local RSDLP committee.

A Bolshevik centre was set up in Russia towards the end of 1904,

its members having been selected at a special 22-man conference.<sup>15</sup> Its instructions were to rally Bolshevik forces in Russia and launch preparations for the Third Party Congress.

Throughout the autumn months of 1904, Litvinov travelled up and down Russia, changing passports time and again. If the police had caught him, he would have faced 20 years' hard labour. And spies were looking for him all over the country. The chief of the Wilno police was informed that Litvinov was living in the city illegally.

In those last few months of 1904, the correspondence between Lenin and Litvinov was fairly intensive. Litvinov was elected to the RSDLP's North-Western Committee. He visited Riga, St. Petersburg, Minsk, Petrozavodsk, Bobruisk, and Dvinsk. But his main place of stay was Riga. And Lenin's letters came to his Riga address. On December 3, 1904, Lenin wrote from Paris:

"Dear friend, I received news of Martyn Nikolayevich's arrival (I have not seen him myself), from which I infer that things are in a bad way. The Bolsheviks in Russia and those abroad are at sixes and sevens again. From three years' experience I know that such disunity can do enormous damage to our cause..."

In another letter, Lenin asked Litvinov (as he also did in letters to Alexander Bogdanov<sup>16</sup> and Rosalia Zemlyachka<sup>17</sup>) to start a Bolshevik newspaper in Russia, stop the dissent among Bolsheviks, and settle a few other things.

Soon, one more letter arrived. Lenin asked Litvinov to make haste. He wanted swift, resolute action. And the Bolshevik centre, that is, Litvinov and his comrades, accomplished the seemingly impossible. At that moment, the Mensheviks held the upper hand in the northern branches of the RSDLP. Yet the centre managed to secure a Bolshevik majority. In mid-December, it sent the minutes of a northern regional conference held that month in Kolpino near St. Petersburg to Lenin in Geneva. At that conference, the organisation of the centre was, in effect, completed. And on December 26, Lenin posted an elated reply to Rosalia Zemlyachka:

"Hurrah! You've done a splendid job... A conference like that is hard to control in Russian conditions. But you've done well. The importance of this is enormous." At once, Lenin sent specific instructions: "Once again make a round of the committees of the South (*and the Volga*), stressing the importance of giving every support to the newspaper *Vperyod*".

Transportation, he wrote, would be taken care of so long as there was Litvinov. But the latter should teach others the tricks of his trade in case of arrest.

And one more letter from Lenin, a reply to Litvinov's letter

briefing Lenin on his work in various parts of Russia and on the accord to unite local Bolshevik committees. Here it is:

"Dear friend, I hasten to reply to your letter, which pleased me very, very much. You are a thousand times right that we must act vigorously, in a revolutionary way, and strike the iron while it's hot. I agree, too, it is the Bolshevik committees that must be united... Finally, you are a thousand times right in that we must act openly."

Lenin let Litvinov know that seven people had been recommended to the Bolshevik centre, including four who were abroad, namely, Lenin, Vorovsky,<sup>18</sup> Lunacharsky,<sup>19</sup> and Olminsky.<sup>20</sup> He listed Litvinov second, adding that Odessa and St. Petersburg had been informed.

Again, Litvinov was en route. He visited the Volga country, as Lenin had asked, made his appearance in Moscow, then in the Baltic states, and finally headed for St. Petersburg. And wherever he went, he secured support for the Bolshevik plan of calling the Third Congress. So that Litvinov's name will always be remembered among those of other Leninists who had borne the brunt of the struggle against the Mensheviks.

News of the January 9, 1905 massacre<sup>21</sup> outside the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg reached Litvinov when he was en route. At once, he returned to Riga. The city was in ferment. There was an enormous demonstration on January 13. Tens of thousands went into the streets. And, as in St. Petersburg, the gendarmes opened fire. Seventy people were shot dead near the Railway Bridge. And a general strike erupted.

The bloody events in St. Petersburg and Riga prompted the Latvian Social-Democratic Labour Party to renounce its national isolation, and to move closer to the RSDLP. Preparations began in Riga for the Third Party Congress. Litvinov was deeply involved.

The centre was making visible headway. By the end of January, messages in support of holding the Third Congress came from all parts of Russia. And Litvinov sent Lenin a letter expounding the Riga Committee's proposals concerning the draft documents. "I'm communicating with you on behalf of the centre," he wrote. "The Declaration has been drawn up. It does not differ from the draft in principle. There was an argument about having one centre: not much significance was attached to the issue. My viewpoint is clear from the attached article. There are many more changes in the Draft of the Rules. In Point 1 the following bodies are listed as having been constituted by the Congress: Council, Central Committee, Central Organ, and the League. Point 2 lists eight new committees with voting rights.

Points 3 and 4 are unaltered, Point 5 has been thrown out, and Points 6 and 7 are the same as before... Since the changes are considerable, we've decided you must be asked. If you accept them, cable: safe and sound. The Declaration has been posted to you. The telegram should best be sent from Germany."

Lenin replied promptly. Thereupon, the Riga branch of the RSDLP elected Maxim Litvinov its delegate to the congress. At the end of March he went abroad.

The Third Congress was to have been held in Copenhagen, and Litvinov with a group of other delegates headed for the Danish capital. Lenin came to Copenhagen from Geneva. He had a conference with delegates who were members of the Bolshevik centre. They made brief reports. Litvinov reported on the situation in the North-Western Committee.

It was more than a year since he had left Switzerland and had not seen Lenin. As usual, Lenin had a thousand questions about the situation at home, about the people, and about the mood in the Party branches. He examined his associates. How young all of them were! Litvinov was only 28, yet had done so much. Lenin took notes, to be used in his report at the congress.

But the congress could not be held in Copenhagen. The tsarist police, which had contacted the Danish government, was making trouble. The authorities demanded that the Russian revolutionaries should leave the city. They decided to go to Malmö in Sweden, but this plan fell through as well: the Russian police prevailed on the Swedish authorities to close Malmö to them. But a way out was found. Litvinov chartered a steamer, and all the 38 Bolsheviks, with Lenin at their head, sailed for London. Years later, Litvinov would write in the *Pravda*:

"In London, too, we had had to take precautions so as not to attract the attention of the local authorities. A different place was picked for each sitting. It was only thanks to these stratagems that we made sure of the delegates' safe return to Russia."

The Third (London) Congress of the RSDLP took place when the revolutionary sentiment in Russia was in high tide. After the peaceful procession in St. Petersburg was fired upon, strikes broke out all over the country. It was therefore up to the congress to work out the right tactics. Overthrow of tsarism and bourgeois-democratic revolution with hegemony of the working class in alliance with all peasants, was defined as the immediate objective. The congress raised the question of an armed uprising. Two reports were heard, that of Lunacharsky and Bogdanov. A heated debate ensued. Not all delegates



were aware of its importance, but accepted Lenin's resolution:

"The Third Congress of the RSDLP acknowledges that the objective of organising the proletariat for direct struggle against the autocracy by means of an armed uprising is one of the chief and one of the most urgent of the Party's tasks at the present revolutionary moment."

The Congress instructed all Party branches to arm the proletariat. Lenin spoke of a provisional revolutionary government, of setting up a revolutionary-democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, with the future government being its executive body.

Before leaving for home, on April 27, the delegates visited Highgate Cemetery: a silent little band, heads bared, 38 Russian revolutionaries with Lenin in the lead crowded round the grave of Karl Marx.

The planned armed uprising created enormous problems, and the biggest of all was where to obtain arms. This was practically impossible in Russia. The only way was to buy arms abroad.

Even before the Third Congress, the Bolsheviks had ordered arms in London. The Central Committee instructed Litvinov to receive and ship them to Russia. He had his hands full throughout the spring of 1905, renewing old routes. When the summer began he left for Berlin.

Lenin's phrase, "transportation would be taken care of, so long as there was Litvinov", in his letter to Rosalia Zemlyachka, was perfectly correct. For two years, Litvinov had supervised the transportation of the *Iskra* and other literature to Russia. And the Central Committee, including Lenin, was pleased with the job he had done.

After the Third Congress, transportation became all-important. Berlin, where the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks had a common transport group, was a major point of transit for literature, and often also for arms, going to Russia. After the Second Congress, however, the Mensheviks had seized control of the transport group. It became more difficult to send Bolshevik literature to Russia. Lenin suggested that Litvinov should go to Berlin without delay and take over the Party's transport office there.

Letters, coded notes, and other documents from the Party archives have enabled me to trace how Litvinov fulfilled Lenin's instructions. Again, we see Litvinov resolute, firm, persevering.

The man in charge of the transport office in Berlin was Vladimir Kopp, a Menshevik. (Fifteen years later, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov and member of the Foreign Commissariat's Collegium Vladimir Kopp would work together on many foreign policy issues.) Litvinov arrived in Berlin and went into action

immediately. By virtue of the powers that the Central Committee had given him, he appointed Bolshevik Osip Pyatnitsky<sup>22</sup> (who would become one of the most prominent Party and Comintern personalities) in place of a Menshevik, to take charge of the central literature stores.

On June 1, 1905, Litvinov wrote Kopp a note: "The literature that you are to send to Russia will be supplied by Comrade Pyatnitsky, whom I have put in charge of our Party's Berlin stores."

Kopp declared that he did not recognise Pyatnitsky's appointment. So, Litvinov sent him another note:

"Dear comrade, I have just received your *Express-Brief*. It surprised me. Evidently, we shall have to discuss the matter eye to eye. Will come to see you tomorrow morning at eleven."

And to make assurance doubly sure, Litvinov added: "I have already written you today about Pyatnitsky's appointment as chief of stores."

What happened in the next three days is reflected in Kopp's panic-stricken letter to Litvinov. He attached so much importance to it that he even noted the time it was sent: four in the afternoon on June 14, 1905. Kopp wrote:

"I have just been informed that the door to the stores of which we are jointly in charge with Pyatnitsky, has a new lock. I assume that this was done by one of your friends, and since I consider it a gross violation of our rights, as guaranteed in Note 1 to Paragraph 1 of our agreement with the Central Committee, I beg you to have the lock removed as quickly as possible..."

Kopp's letter need not be quoted in full. What is important were the events that followed. Litvinov took charge of the stores and sent large shipments of Bolshevik literature to Russia. A few days later, however, he had to go to Geneva, and the Mensheviks took advantage of his absence to conclude an accord with Leonid Krasin,<sup>23</sup> a member of the Party's Central Committee. The accord worked against the interests of the Bolsheviks. Krasin had been misled by the Mensheviks, and signed it.

The story reached Lenin's ears in considerably distorted shape. The Mensheviks raised a row, charging Litvinov with unilateral action. Lenin asked Litvinov for an explanation. On June 19-20, Litvinov wrote this letter to Lenin:

"You should not be angry with me. I have spoken with Krasin. He wanted to go and see Kopp. But I asked him to find out if the man would be staying in the Party. As for settling relations between the Berlin transport office and the Central Committee, and appointing people to it—Krasin has left all that to me. How could I have known

that Krasin would conclude an accord without my knowledge... The draft of the accord was drawn up by Postolovsky, who didn't say a word about it to me. I can barely keep up with all the stupidities. I had had to hurry to Geneva to draft routes for our comrades, but I didn't think I'd have to hurry back to Berlin."

Litvinov said he would be leaving within 30 minutes, and added he would write a letter to Krasin on the way. His destination was Tilsit, where, he hoped, the Germans would agree to deal with the Bolsheviks. In that case, he added, Kopp would be dropped completely. He also wrote that he did not think the deal with the rifles would come through. The Germans had warned him against receiving them through Swiss customs.

On June 22, Litvinov arrived in Tilsit. At night, in the Kaiserhof, a second-rate hotel, he wrote a long letter to Krasin, censuring his accord with the Mensheviks and asking for it to be scrapped at once.

"I was surprised when I learned about your accord with Kopp," he wrote. "I am sure, it would never have come about if you had asked my opinion. I find it deleterious for the Central Committee and the Party... Kopp insists that the Central Committee should have no other transport office. Consequently, contacts that are so far known only to me or Pyatnitsky, and those I shall make in future, will be known to the whole transport office. This would be a restraint upon the Central Committee; the supply of literature from abroad would depend on the goodwill of people who have betrayed our confidence time and again in the past."

The accord with the Mensheviks was torn up. Krasin let Lenin know that Litvinov had been right. Now the Berlin transport office was in Litvinov's hands. Coping with unpredictable obstacles, the Bolsheviks managed to send literature and arms to Russia on a practically regular basis.

The tide of revolution in Russia was rising. The Central Committee instructed Litvinov to leave the Berlin transport office in Pyatnitsky's charge, and go to Russia at once. At the end of the summer he was back in Riga.

After the disturbances, the city was like a seething cauldron. The police had run amuck. Arrests followed in quick succession. A group of detained Latvian Party members faced a death sentence for throwing bombs on May 1 and 2. There was to be a court-martial, and time was running short. In the early morning hours of September 7, Latvian militants attacked the Riga prison to rescue their comrades.

Litvinov was elsewhere on the Baltic coast, preparing squads for the planned uprising. In late September, he received a letter from

Lenin requesting details about the Riga events. It was a troubled letter. Lenin and the Central Committee were against sporadic and spontaneous outbursts. They held rightly that this only dispersed strength and complicated preparations for a massive proletarian armed action. Litvinov replied:

"The attack on the prison was most probably organised by the Letts or the Federative Committee (Letts plus the Bundites). Our workers, too, were toying with a plan of freeing Mark and George. But George is detained in some police station, and I think, therefore, that this is not our affair. Menshevik involvement in a rescue attempt is still less likely. You can be sure of one thing: the Socialist-Revolutionaries<sup>24</sup> had nothing to do with it: there are none of them in Riga. In short, I am almost sure that the thing was organised by the Letts, and have cabled you to that effect. Out of the attackers, two were apprehended, and as many prisoners were freed. The success was therefore partial. By the way, the editors of *Proletary* show too much faith in the foreign press. In one of their latest issues—the twelfth or the thirteenth — they reproduced the *Lokal anzeiger* report about a clash with the troops in Riga causing a large number of casualties, dead and wounded. The report is completely groundless. Best regards, Phoenix."<sup>25</sup>

Multiplying revolutionary actions in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and the events in Riga and other Russian cities, showed that the resolution of the London RSDLP Congress on supplying workers with arms had been most timely. Still, arms were scarce. Litvinov was on pins and needles, awaiting transports of machine-guns and rifles from Germany. But they were like a drop in the ocean. He needed money to buy more arms. The Party's cashbox, however, was empty. In despair, Litvinov wrote to Lenin on September 26, 1905. He wrote that the routes of the year before could be effectively used to ship arms. He said he was ready to sell his soul to the devil to obtain the requisite filthy lucre. "I can buy Brownings in Russia," he went on, "but what we need is rifles, especially the Mauser type..."

In September, Litvinov went to St. Petersburg to obtain arms. But his activity was cut short. In November 1905, Lenin returned to Russia and plunged at once into Party work. Taking first things first, he held a conference with the Bolshevik part of the staff of the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn*. Litvinov had been in charge of the paper's administrative affairs. So let Litvinov tell us about it himself in one of his few records:

"In early November 1905, I received Krasin's offer to set up a legal Social-Democratic newspaper, *Novaya Zhizn*. I had come to St. Petersburg from Riga and lived there with a passport issued in the



name of Ludwig Nitz, because I mistrusted the October amnesty. Neither was I sure that the amnesty applied to me, because the police held me responsible for beating up a guard during my prison escape in Kiev. An undergrounder as publisher of a large daily! A savoury joke. In the past, I have had to do with underground printing plants and had been in charge of the *Iskra* printshop and distribution in Geneva. It was a tempting offer therefore to apply myself to setting up the first legal Social-Democratic newspaper. I accepted it. The same offer had been made a few days before to Isidore Gukovsky. But he wasn't making out too well, and it was decided to appoint him associate editor, and to let me handle the administrative end.

"Obtaining a license for the paper would have taken too long. So we made use of the one already issued to poet Minsky, who, as a result, figured as the editor-in-chief. We also needed someone to be the paper's official publisher, and picked Maria Andreyeva.<sup>26</sup> Writer Maxim Gorky made himself responsible for funding the paper.

"I left for Moscow at once to discuss finances with Gorky, and to get a power-of-attorney from Andreyeva. On November 8, I was ordered to put out the first issue of the paper the following day. Tentative arrangements were made with the Narodnaya Polza printing plant. We leased a place on Nevsky Prospekt for our offices. But we had neither furniture, nor a staff, nor distribution facilities—nothing at all. Out of the furniture, we bought the first things we could lay our hands on. The staff was picked among members of our district branches, and distribution was entrusted to bookbinder Kaplan, a Party member, who, I regret to say, failed to cope with the job.

"The administration consisted of Krasin, Gukovsky, and me.

"The workers and the general public in St. Petersburg waited impatiently for the first issue of *Novaya zhizn*, the first legal Social-Democratic newspaper. Their impatience increased when we announced that a free supplement, the Party's programme, would go with it. Our Nevsky Prospekt office was besieged by people from the early morning. The printing plant was slow and produced only about 15,000 copies during the night. They were literally torn out of the hands of our messengers as they carried them to our office. So the printing continued all day, and copies were handed out as soon as they reached the office.

"In this commotion we could not organise any street sales. Workers from the city's outlying districts sent messengers to pick up bundles of papers at our Nevsky office. The same occurred in the next few days. The printshop was unable to meet the demand. Distribution was still poorly arranged, and subscribers in the provinces, with the sole exception of Moscow, got none of the first issues. People applied for

subscriptions by the thousands every day. Postal remittances arrived in basketfuls. Telegrams came from the provinces, pleading for papers. Lots of people did not know the price of a subscription, and remitted hundreds of roubles by telegraph, saying they wanted the paper at any price.

"The office staff consisted mainly of Party members who knew next to nothing about newspaper techniques. As a result, efficiency was low. We suffered most of all from the ineffectiveness of the distributor. I worked 20 hours a day, sometimes 24. Within 10 days, however, we managed to get a new, additional printshop, to arrange for better distribution, to recruit a few experienced people from other papers, and to shuffle the office staff. We signed contracts with the vendors' cooperative, registered the paper at the post-office, organised special squads to deliver the paper to the working-class districts, and farmed out an advertising concession.

"The apparatus kept limping along. The paper often came out too late for the departing mail train because we had it printed in two printshops—the outside sheet in one, and the inside sheet in the other. As a result, we were not able to cope with the ever increasing demand. The post-office, too, created problems: bundles of newspapers piled up at railway stations for days. Besides, subscribers complained that postal employees and postmen appropriated copies of the newspaper to read.

"In the provinces, people formed groups to subscribe collectively. Profiteers pushed the paper's price up to a rouble and more. Within a month, however, nearly all the faults were remedied and the staff began ticking like clock-work—so much so that when a conference of St. Petersburg newspaper administrators was called to work out tactics against the postal authorities, the police, and profiteering vendors, I was chosen its standing chairman. This, I should say, was a tribute to the way our paper was run....

"Soon, the paper became the centre of Party life in St. Petersburg. Party conferences, meetings, rendezvous, and the like, were held in our editorial offices. The place was becoming crowded, and we moved to new premises on Troitskaya Street.

"Workers, peasants, and townsmen came to us with grievances; officials, army officers, even policemen came to confess past deeds and declare their sympathy for the Social-Democrats. Indeed, I was warned in advance of the raid on the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies early that morning by a Guards officer who came to our office in person."

Lenin's arrival in St. Petersburg led to considerable changes in the make-up of the editorial staff. He simply would not suffer the in-

fluence that the group led by Minsky, who was the paper's formal owner, tried to exercise. His resolution paid off: the editorial offices were placed completely under Central Committee control. Lenin himself took a most active part in putting out the paper, and was often seen at the printshop late at night, looking through the pageproofs.

After the paper printed the "Manifesto", Litvinov's record goes on, the authorities closed it. The order reached the printshop late at night and, with the consent of the compositors and printers, it was decided to put out the last issue of the paper in spite of the ban. The printshop's administration protested, and was locked up in one of the rooms to prevent it from doing any mischief. The issue was not sent to the distribution office but directly to the workers' districts. In the morning, the police faced a *fait accompli*.

The Nevsky Prospekt office was kept open for a while to wind up affairs.

"When I came there once," Litvinov noted in his records, "the doorman whispered that a detective wanted to see me. I asked what the man wished. The doorman said he wished to ask whether any of the people on the list he had left with the doorman had been on our staff. I glanced at the note and saw my real name on it, and also the real name of our semi-legal employee named Mouse (Lalayants), and the name of my secretary, Yelena Smitten. Evidently, the police had not yet identified me, and was planning to ask me about myself. I did not want to push my luck, and told the doorman to send the detective up if he came. In fact, however, I went to my office to pick up all my papers, and departed by the back door. A few days later, I left St. Petersburg. The papers reported that the police had searched our offices and claimed to have found arms. Andreyeva, Gukovsky, and I were to be put on trial. If I remember rightly, Andreyeva and Gukovsky were summoned to court, while the case against me was suspended."

Naturally, Litvinov did not know what measures the police was taking to apprehend him. It is all down in the police records. Litvinov's traces were spotted in St. Petersburg, though the police failed to identify Ludwig Nitz as Litvinov. It was not until January 4, 1906, when *Novaya Zhizn* was already banned, that the police sent a secret circular (No. 171) to the chief of the St. Petersburg special branch, saying that Max Wallach was in St. Petersburg and was employed at *Nasha Zhizn*. Some police officer later crossed out the word *Nasha*, and wrote in *Novaya*.

But there was no arrest. Frightened out of its wits by the prospect of revolution, the tsarist government was pulling its punches, which enabled Litvinov to evade capture.

Reaction went on the rampage all over Russia in early 1906. Years later, Litvinov recollected: "The first Soviet of Workers' Deputies in St. Petersburg was crushed, an armed rising in Moscow was suppressed, legal Social-Democratic newspapers were closed down... The Mensheviks rolled up their banner in haste and proclaimed the end of the first revolution, dampening the revolutionary spirit of the proletariat and preparing the Party's liquidation. Lenin's Bolshevik Party, however, did not abandon stations. It encouraged revolutionaries to prepare for a new attack on the autocracy."

But there had to be arms. Local Bolshevik organisations asked for them. Those in the Transcaucasus asked for them. Messengers arrived from Tiflis in the autumn of 1905. They handed over 200,000 roubles and asked the Central Committee to buy arms abroad. The Central Committee agreed, and at once the question arose of who to send on this dangerous mission.

After the banning of *Novaya Zhizn*, Litvinov asked the Central Committee for a new assignment. Krasin suggested two things: either Litvinov should accompany Maxim Gorky to the United States as organiser of his lecture tour, proceeds from which would go to the Party cashbox, or he could take on the job of buying arms for Bolshevik organisations in the Transcaucasus and elsewhere.

Litvinov turned down the trip to the United States, which, he foresaw, would be little more than a joy-ride. He could not leave Russia, where things were coming to a boil. He chose to organise the arms transports. That was more to his taste. And that brings us to one of the most brilliant chapters in Litvinov's pre-October 1917 biography.



### Chapter 3

#### THE GUN-RUNNER

Some Russian emigrant opened an office in a quiet Paris street in early 1906. Agents of the tsarist police took due notice. They wanted to know who this emigrant was, what he was doing, and why he had opened the office. Soon, a coded telegram to St. Petersburg said the office belonged to a man named Lelkov, and that he was probably none other than Litvinov. The office, they figured, was a front, and there was evidence that Lelkov-Litvinov was nursing some dangerous plan against the Russian Empire.

They were not far wrong: under the signboard of a Paris office, Litvinov set out to place orders with European arms manufacturers. He decided to order several thousand Mauser and Mannlicher rifles, the requisite number of cartridges, and also some machine-guns and various small arms. Danish machine-guns were the most portable in those days. The Danes accepted his order and said a Danish army officer would come to Paris in a few days with samples of the machine-guns for testing.

Litvinov wondered what guise to assume? Could he admit to being a Russian revolutionary? No, he would say he was an army officer from Ecuador. Latin American countries were at each other's throats fairly often, and sent people to Europe to buy arms. An officer of the Ecuador army would not arouse suspicion and, indeed, the contact with the Danish officer passed off very well.

Litvinov travelled all over Europe throughout the summer of 1906, ordering arms in Brussels, Vienna, Karlsruhe, Hamburg, Berlin, the Hague, and Liège.

Branches of the Paris office were required in other European cities. One such branch was set up in Zurich. One more was opened in Liège, with Boris Stomoniakov, a Bulgarian, at its head. More branches were established elsewhere. Rosalia Dudovskaya was helping Litvinov at the time, and was in constant touch with him by mail.

Here is a letter from Litvinov in Moscow, dated February 27, 1906, to Dudovskaya in Paris:

"As I expected, I landed up with the police. But they held me for

a few hours only. Finally, I managed to get out of St. Petersburg, and have come to Moscow. Today, I am going to set out for the West. If nothing happens at Rubakin's, I may be in Berlin by Saturday. Will write you from there."

Who this Rubakin was, I shall relate a bit later.

Another of Litvinov's letters, this time from Sofia to Paris, dated July 19, 1906:

"Have just come to Bulgaria. The policemen, gendarmes, and officers wear Russian uniforms. Passports are checked at border crossings. The roads are as badly tended as ours. At times it is as though I am in Smolensk, Pskov, or the like. Everything is like home, with a few eastern particulars added. Have seen no one so far, and have no idea how long I'll be stuck here."

One more letter from Sofia to Paris a week later:

"Have just received your registered letter. Found the cheque that I had asked you about in yesterday's letter. Don't inquire at the bank. Leave the money there for the time being. I'll let you know in a few days where to send it."

Litvinov's next letter was from Vienna to Paris, dated July 28, 1906. Litvinov put down the time he wrote it: 7 p.m.

"I'm on pins and needles, waiting impatiently for your telegram... My assumptions have completely paralysed further action. I'm waiting. I've just received your *Express-Brief*."

And one more letter from Vienna to Genoa:

"I'm approaching longed-for Karlsruhe at full speed, cutting down on my stop-overs in Berne and Berlin... I have let you know the address. You can write to me through the Small One." (Evidently, the reference is to Boris Stomoniakov.—Z.S.)

Litvinov's wholly respectable appearance and excellent knowledge of languages gave him access to arms producers. He placed his order for Mausers at Belgian plants and for cartridges for them at the Deutsche Waffenfabrik in Karlsruhe. In Trieste, he managed to buy Mannlicher rifles that some country had ordered and then rejected. The cartridges for them were ordered at the big Austrian arms manufacturing firm Styer, where he identified himself as representing a Belgian firm. This created no suspicions. The Belgian arms manufacturers had a good reputation all over Europe, and their "representative" spoke such excellent French, and was so charming, that the Austrians were overwhelmed.

In Karlsruhe, when ordering cartridges for Mauser rifles, Litvinov landed in a situation that smacked of an adventure novel.

Later, Litvinov recollected:

"The director of the plant informed me that a Russian govern-

ment commission had also come to Karlsruhe, and suggested that I accompany him to meet the commission and then go to the range for trials. I had no choice but to accept. I was introduced to the Russian officers, and even made friends with them for a few hours. They gave me highly competent advice when testing cartridges, with the result that I rejected a few cases."

After the trials at the range, the lot of them went to a beer hall, where they slapped each other's backs and paid each other compliments. In the end, the officers invited Litvinov to visit Russia. He thanked them politely and promised to come.

But shipping arms to Russia was still a long way off. Many were the dangers and obstacles. The best of Russia's policemen, the most experienced police spies abroad, police residents in Paris, the Balkans, and elsewhere had been alerted. They were ordered to prevent the shipment of Bolshevik arms to Russia.

A brief for top police officers based on the reports of Harting, the chief Russian police spy abroad, dated March 9, 1906, said:

"Meyer Wallach, alias Litvinov, alias Felix, alias Papasha, has recently paid a short visit to Berlin en route from St. Petersburg. He has instructions to buy large quantities of arms (revolvers, cartridges, rifles, machine-guns, and the like) and arrange for their shipment to Russia. Another Social-Democrat, Hermann, alias Victor, has arrived from Helsingfors to assist him, and Pyotr Germogenovich Smidovich, alias Vassily Ivanovich Chervinsky, alias Matryona, is expected in a few days. The latter is to settle in a convenient port (our agents will soon find out what port) to arrange arms shipments.

"They intend to purchase a large quantity of bomb detonators. Those already purchased are intact in St. Petersburg.

"Wallach went from Berlin to Karlsruhe to see his brother and to call at the Bergmann factory, which is filling an order for machine-guns and carbines. At present, Wallach is in Paris, the centre for his gun-running. The money, on the other hand, is to be kept in Berlin. Thirty-five thousand roubles are expected to arrive from St. Petersburg this week. The recipients are afraid the big sums sent from Russia may be confiscated in connection with the circular on 'doubtful' money. Agents will soon know the addresses to which money is remitted from Russia for the Social-Democratic Party."

Another special brief (No. 8609) on Litvinov was issued on June 5, 1906:

"The revolutionary Meyer Wallach, who is running arms to Black Sea and Baltic ports, is at present in Marseilles. He is being helped by members of the Latvian Revolutionary Group, who are sending small lots of arms to the Baltic countries from North German ports."

The Russian secret police alerted all its spies in Europe, and picked up some vital information. It learned, for example, that a member of the Party's Central Committee known as Nikitich had transferred 10,000 roubles from St. Petersburg to Paris through the Cr dit Lyonnais, and that another 90,000 roubles had been remitted from Russia some time before: all this money to be paid for arms bought by Litvinov.

Money to buy arms came not only from the Party's Transcaucasian branch. Workers in Russia collected large sums, with 20,000 roubles going to Litvinov in Paris. A considerable contribution was made by Maxim Gorky.

Russian police spy Harting reported that he had secretly perused some of Litvinov's letters, and discovered that the money from St. Petersburg was being sent by a certain Roman Semyonovich Malkin domiciled at 61 Bolshaya Pushkarskaya and a Yekaterina Fyodorovna von Krit, living in Mustomiakki, a station on the Finnish Railway.

Among others, Harting intercepted and decoded Litvinov's letter from Paris to the Party's Central Committee in St. Petersburg. The letter read:

"Dear friends, I'll try to answer your questions:

"(1) The Germans were good enough to contribute 10,000 marks, which they handed to a comrade (Kohn, German Social-Democrat, a lawyer) whom Deutsch had authorised. In a few days, this money will be passed on to Ab-v (Roman). Avoid sending money to and fro. I suggest we keep this money, while you take the same amount out of the Caucasian money.

"(2) Gorky has left a few days ago for a short vacation in Switzerland.

"(3) Missed the Engineer\* while he was here... As soon as G. returns, I'll go to Zurich to negotiate with the Engineer. In the meantime, I've examined a variety of arms systems and checked their prices... It will not be difficult to buy arms... They could be transported via Bulgaria with the assistance of the Macedonians.

"About 2,000 francs are left over from the sale of property, and about 5,000 from the proceeds for Gorky's lectures. He wouldn't take anything out of this money, and lived on his own cash."

Surprisingly, in August 1906, the police had no inkling that in Russia all threads related to the arms running led to Krasin. Nor did the police know that Ludwig Martens, who was busy making a rapid-action portable machine-gun he had himself invented, was living in Zurich. The Bolsheviks wanted the machine-gun for themselves, and

\* Engineer—code-name of Ludwig Martens.



Litvinov visited Martens in Zurich, where they tested the new weapon. Owing to technical faults, the idea was dropped. Instead, Martens helped assemble machine-guns out of spare parts Litvinov had bought in different countries.

Now that he had ordered the desired amount of arms, Litvinov tackled a no less important task: that of getting the arms to one of the ports for shipment to Russia.

But what port to choose?

Russian police spies were on the lookout in all European ports. Many of them stayed there almost permanently in the hope of discovering how the arms shipments would go. They knew the tentative routes: via Finland by steamer, via America, via Germany, and by sea to Odessa. One police report said the revolutionaries had meant to send the arms via Finland, but changed their minds on account of rumours that troops there were being reinforced. They picked America, where they would buy arms and send them to Japan and thence to Siberia. The report said a man named Herman\* would accompany Gorky for this purpose during the latter's tour of America. It said the revolutionaries counted on Germany least of all, because it was practically impossible to send arms across the border by rail. If they did use the German route, they would try and cross the border with the help of professional smugglers. The crossings would be organised by those residing in Berlin—a Lett named Hoffmann, whose identity the spy in question was trying to determine, and a Finn called Karl Berg, who passed himself off as a merchant with extensive connections and was in fact a member of the Red Guard.

Police spies had found out, too, that large amounts of arms were cached in St. Petersburg, but that many of the rifles were useless because they had no cartridges, while the available large lots of cartridges were not usable with any of the available rifles. They claimed that a stolen large-calibre gun was also cached in St. Petersburg.

The assumptions of the police spies were inaccurate. Litvinov wanted a port that was maximally close to the Caucasus, and was looking for a steamer he could charter, and a captain who'd agree to transfer his cargo of arms at night in the open sea into feluccas near Batum. It was incredibly difficult to keep the shipment secret, to conceal it from police spies, and to lull the suspicions of the customs authorities. For the customs in any port of the world always wanted to know the destination of every departing ship and what cargo it was carrying.

Litvinov considered almost all the ports of Holland, Belgium,

\* The reference is evidently to Leonid Krasin.

France, Italy, and Austria-Hungary. He sought the advice of friends in the local socialist parties and the trade unions. All of them said the plan was sure to fail. So, after much reflection, he decided to concentrate the arms in the Bulgarian port of Varna, and ship it from there to Russia.

Negotiations began. Litvinov looked for contacts in the Bulgarian government. He assured the Bulgarians that the arms were intended for Armenians, to be used against their Turkish oppressors. The idea appealed to the Bulgarians, but they were hesitant. Meanwhile, Litvinov made contact with a Macedonian revolutionary, Tiufenchiev, a man of extraordinary courage but not, as Litvinov later found out, too discriminating in his choice of methods. Tiufenchiev asked for an exorbitant sum of money, saying he had to pay others, and so on.

Though he tried, Tiufenchiev could not do very much. They had to have the backing of someone with pull in the government. Or the operation would fail. So Litvinov took a desperate step. He returned to Paris and obtained an audience with General Savov, the Bulgarian war minister. No one knows what was said at the interview. But Savov promised to help. The arms were sent to Varna in sealed boxcars. All Litvinov had to do now was either to charter or to buy a ship.

"I decided to buy a boat and get a dependable crew in Russia," Litvinov recollected. "A modest-sized yacht was bought in Fiume for the relatively moderate sum of 30,000 francs. It had crossed from America to Europe and was quite big enough to serve our purpose."

The yacht was overhauled, adapted to carry cargo, and sent to Varna with its old crew.

"In Varna everything was ready for sailing in July or August," Litvinov recalled. "And I'm sure everything would have gone off splendidly if we had managed to sail at once. But we had money trouble."

On September 11, 1906, a Russian police spy sent an urgent message to his superiors. His assignment was in London, but whether he despatched his top secret report from the British capital or from Berlin it is now impossible to establish.

"Litvinov is here," he reported. "He has had a misunderstanding with the Central Committee. The latter had spent 40,000 roubles and refuses to repay them. Litvinov sent two Georgians to the CC to demand that it return the money or they would bump off someone of the CC. The Georgians are furious. Most likely, they'll get the money, but so far there's a delay."

The police spy went out of his way to get more details, but in vain. He did not know of the conflict between Litvinov and the Mensheviks.

The arms shipment from Varna to Batum was held up. And here begins the most dramatic part of the tale.

Litvinov had received his instructions to organise arms transports in the beginning of 1906. The assignment was given him by the Bolshevik Central Committee. But while Litvinov was in Paris, placing orders for arms, the Fourth Unity Congress of the RSDLP gathered in Stockholm at the end of April 1906. Lenin had worked out the Bolshevik platform some months before, in February 1906. The resolutions drafted by the Bolsheviks and Lenin, called for a new revolutionary onslaught against the autocracy. The Mensheviks countered with a tactical platform that, in substance, renounced revolutionary forms of struggle. And they had more voting delegates than the Bolsheviks: 62 against the Bolsheviks' 46.

Though, in name, the Stockholm Congress had unified the Party, unity was lacking.

On learning that the majority in the new Central Committee was Menshevik, Litvinov asked to be relieved of his mission. For arms would not be needed if the CC rejected armed struggle. But the CC turned down his request.

Let Litvinov tell us why in his own words:

"Great was my surprise when the new CC, evidently under pressure of the Transcaucasian branch, reaffirmed my mandate and suggested that I complete my job. But though it said I should carry on, it cut off all assistance. I had not been provident, and had not transferred the money that the Caucasian comrades had placed at my disposal. I used to get the money from the Central Committee when I needed it.

"Prior to the Stockholm Congress, my financial requests were always met promptly. I was able to pay all bills, consolidating my own position and winning the confidence of the businessmen I dealt with. But after the Central Committee fell into Menshevik hands, there were delays. Nor did they reply promptly to my telegrams and letters. My requests for money fell on deaf ears. I protested. I cursed. I pointed out that success depended on timely shipment of arms before the Black Sea storms in autumn. The situation was disastrous, and, seeing that telegrams and letters had no effect, I was compelled to go to St. Petersburg myself."

Litvinov left for Russia at the end of September 1906. From Paris he headed for Berlin, and from Berlin to St. Petersburg. He did not know that a Russian police spy in Paris had wired St. Petersburg (despatch No. 81/1544) that Litvinov, posing as Gustav Graf, a Dresden merchant, would be going to Russia via Berlin.

The developments were swift. Coded police messages to St. Peters-

burg, Warsaw, Wilno, and other cities traced Litvinov's itinerary. The first such message, No. 18689, reached St. Petersburg on October 9. It said Litvinov had crossed the border at Aleksandrovo en route to St. Petersburg, carrying the passport of a Gustav Graf of Dresden. The message also said the gendarmerie was keeping an eye on him.

On the following day, that is, October 10, an urgent message reached the chief of police in Warsaw. Let me cite it in full, because, among other things, it shows why Gustav Graf, whom the police knew to be Litvinov, had not been arrested right there and then in Aleksandrovo:

"Wallach, alias Litvinov, who crossed the border on October 9 at Aleksandrovo with the passport of a Gustav Graf, and who is the organiser of arms transports, is heading via Warsaw for St. Petersburg. Put him under constant surveillance until our men in St. Petersburg take over. The police department expects daily reports."

On that day, the St. Petersburg secret police received one more coded message, requiring that it should at all costs determine Litvinov's connections in Russia.

Who had informed the police of Litvinov's departure for Russia? Who had known of his false passport? The half-decayed papers in the secret police archives reveal that the information had come from an agent who had infiltrated the Russian emigré colony.

In early November 1906, Harting reported to St. Petersburg that a secret agent holding a prominent office in the emigré Social-Democratic organisation was trying to find out the name and sailing date of the ship that Wallach was sending to Russia with a cargo of arms from some foreign port (Trieste or Fiume).

Now let's look at the agent's letter. By the way, it was the same agent who reported that Litvinov had had a misunderstanding with the Central Committee, and that the Georgians were in a fury.

"I have received your letter and money," the agent wrote to his chief. "However critical I am of myself, I cannot say I've done too badly. I am a member of the Central Group Abroad, and get along well with both the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks. I have to write an enormous amount of letters, to have personal contacts with people, and so on. As if this were not enough, I have to study medicine, because if I didn't, I'd be asked why. I'm working hard, and I'm ready to go on working. But here, abroad, it is very difficult to obtain vital information. And this will be so until reprisals drive more revolutionaries out of Russia and, notably, Finland. I can only lie low and wait. It is incomparably harder than before. In the past, all revolutionary activity was abroad, now it is all in Russia or Finland. To have more information I should go to Russia. You shouldn't rep-



rimand me for Litvinov, for you've jeopardised my position twice already. The first time with the carbines. Since then, Litvinov has become a 100 times more secretive. The second time when it became clear to him in Aleksandrovo that his passport had attracted attention, that it was known to the police, and that he was being watched. Instead of observing him secretly, he was singled out among the other passengers and was asked if he spoke Russian or not, how his surname was pronounced, and so on. And this, while another thirty foreigners had passed unquestioned."

At this point in the report, Gendarmery Colonel Gerasimov made a marginal note: "Reprimand Seredov for his stupidity."

The secret agent's letter continued: "The gendarmes paid no attention to his person. They picked on the passport, although I am the only one who knew anything about it. Then there was the clumsy surveillance that left him in no doubt he was being followed. Don't you realise the gendarmes may have given me away. Just think of what would happen if Litvinov suspected me. I say again that I could have known the name and whereabouts of the ship eight or ten weeks ago if we had been more circumspect. Now, in fact, I fear for my hide."

From Aleksandrovo, Litvinov went to Warsaw, and from Warsaw to Wilno. Captain Zavarzin of the Warsaw secret police reported to St. Petersburg that his detectives had tailed Litvinov to Wilno, where he had been passed on to the local police. Things seemed to be going along smoothly. The police was sure Litvinov was a cooked goose.

Then came the staggering news that Litvinov had left Warsaw with two of the most experienced Warsaw detectives on his tail, but did not turn up when the train arrived in Wilno. Lieutenant-Colonel Shebeko, chief of the Wilno special branch, telegraphed St. Petersburg at once that the Warsaw people had lost Litvinov's trail. Two Wilno detectives, Kokor and Dmitriev, were ordered to find Litvinov at any cost.

Coded messages flew to and fro between Warsaw, Wilno, and St. Petersburg. After a long search, Litvinov was finally rediscovered. A detailed description of that operation is extant: on October 10, Litvinov was spotted at ten in the morning. At the railway station, his identity was certified by a Warsaw detective. And when he set out for St. Petersburg that day, Kokor and Dmitriev boarded the same train. The following day at 8 a.m., Litvinov arrived in St. Petersburg, left his suitcase in the cloakroom at the railway station, and set out for town. Petersburg detectives Mizkus and Kudzeiko trailed him.

But they, too, lost Litvinov. On the very first day of his stay in St. Petersburg. He simply vanished into thin air. According to one

version, he had gone back to Warsaw or Wilno. Coded messages were quickly sent out. The search continued in St. Petersburg, Warsaw, Wilno, Riga, and other cities. But it was not until October 24, 1906, that the special branch in St. Petersburg finally reported to its superiors that Litvinov had at last been spotted.

He had spent a few days in St. Petersburg, where he got money from the Mensheviks. Knowing his temper, they did not resist. Still, they managed to hold on to a fairly large bit of the sum set aside for arms. After a heated argument, Litvinov went to Terioki. There, he did not tempt fate, wound up his affairs in Finland, and headed for Varna.

His worst fears had come true: the time for sailing had been missed. The autumn storms had begun. "Still, we had to get the freight aboard," he recollected later, "although the crew from Odessa did not inspire much faith. But there was no way to substitute a more dependable skipper for the obviously unreliable one. I relied mainly on my own people, whom I had put aboard the ship, among them Kamo,<sup>27</sup> a trustworthy revolutionary. I watched the yacht until it disappeared on the horizon, and fancied that the undertaking, to which I had devoted 10 months, was going to succeed.

"But, alas, three days later I learned that owing to a storm or the captain's inexperience, the yacht had run aground near the Romanian shore, and the crew had abandoned ship fearing arrest, while the arms were pilfered by Romanian fishermen."

Neither then nor later did Litvinov learn what had really happened after Kamo and the other Bolsheviks had abandoned the grounded ship. The arms did not fall into the hands of any Romanian fishermen. They were seized by the Romanian authorities—2,000 rifles and 650,000 cartridges.

Many years later, recalling the arms transport to Batum, Litvinov related what had happened to the yacht's captain. He was arrested in Odessa and sent to St. Petersburg, where they threw him into the prison of Petropavlovsk Fortress. There was more to the story that Litvinov did not know. The particulars were down in the secret papers of the police.

The Odessa police learned from an informer in May 1907 that a new arrival who claimed to be Nikita Moroshkin of Melitopol was living at 5 Podolsk Street. The police detained him and discovered his real identity: He was Kayutin-Kayutenko, captain of the yacht.

Kayutin-Kayutenko reached Odessa at the end of 1906, soon after the yacht had run aground. Here he made contact with the local Social-Democrats and was made a member of the Odessa Strike

Committee. His party name was Vladimir. He was seized at the home of a Klavdia Vasilenko, a member of the local Social-Democratic organisation. A police search uncovered large amounts of banned literature.

Kayutin-Kayutenko was charged with gun-running and with conducting seditious activities aboard the steamer *Yekaterinoslav* in the port of Odessa.

The captain did not betray the ideals of the revolution. During World War II, he was in Nazi-occupied territory and helped the anti-Nazi underground. The Nazis tortured his wife before his eyes, demanding that he reveal the whereabouts of a partisan detachment. Kayutin-Kayutenko and his wife chose death rather than treason.

Learning of the yacht's mishap, Litvinov hurried to Bucharest in the hope of saving the arms. He was followed there by a Russian police spy. On December 27, 1906, the spy reported to St. Petersburg that he had followed Litvinov from Varna, and that Litvinov had a Russian passport issued in Moscow on May 13, 1906, to a Nikolai Markov. He was met at the station by a Doctor Rakovsky, who took him to his home. In the same message, the police spy asked for the money that was due to him.

The spy received his pieces of silver. We know this because a note, "Pay him the money", was attached to the spy's message. But he lost Litvinov's track.

Litvinov did not waste time in Romania. It was immediately clear that the arms could not be recovered. The Romanian police was keeping a close watch along the shoreline. So Litvinov went to Germany, then appeared in Paris and other places, arranging arms shipments to the Baltic states. He sent arms to Riga, St. Petersburg, and elsewhere via Tilsit and via Finland, using the old *Iskra* routes, and helped by Latvian militants.

The secret police watched his every step, then lost him again, and looked for him fruitlessly. Litvinov was far away. In August 1907, he set out for Stuttgart to attend a congress of the Second International. The Bolshevik wing of the RSDLP was headed by Lenin; Maxim Litvinov was its secretary. He reappeared in Russia on the eve of the Third All-Russia Conference of the RSDLP. He and Bogdanov toured Bolshevik branches in the Volga country. The police spotted Bogdanov, but could not identify the man who was accompanying him. Coded messages to Moscow, Saratov, and other cities, said some prominent agent of the RSDLP Central Committee had appeared in the Volga country. Finally, the Saratov police established that it was Litvinov, travelling up and down Russia with Bogdanov,

briefing delegates about the Social-Democratic conference that would be held in Helsingfors. An urgent police message said Litvinov had left Moscow en route from Saratov to St. Petersburg. But the police could not be sure Litvinov would go to St. Petersburg.

The chief of police issued an urgent order on November 2, 1907, to arrest Litvinov at any cost. For how much longer would that unpredictable Bolshevik keep slipping through his fingers? The coded message showed the importance attached to Litvinov. Here is its text:

"Besides the more prominent Social-Democrat Bolsheviks, we expect the very serious Bolshevik, Meyer Wallach, alias Litvinov, to make his appearance. His description: age 35, medium height, stocky, round face, light eyes, ginger hair and trimmed moustache, wears glasses or a pince-nez, makes the impression of an actor, and when the situation permits is in the habit of wearing expensive clothes. An old photograph is attached. Make a most vigorous search for him at railway stations, jetties and wharves, and arrest at once, taking security measures against escape. Send him under strong guard to St. Petersburg."

The description in the police message was correct, save for one detail: Litvinov was only 31.

The police did not arrest him then. Again, he slipped through its net.

The Central Committee had a new assignment for him.



## Chapter 4

### BERLIN AND PARIS

On November 9, 1907, Kamo was arrested at 44 Alsasserstrasse, Berlin. The tsarist police had been informed that the now well-known Caucasian revolutionary was helping Litvinov to buy arms, and that he had taken part in fitting out the ill-fated yacht shortly before. Now the gendarmery was trying to trace all the contacts that Litvinov had had with Kamo. It was convinced that Litvinov had planned Kamo's daring expropriation, which created a sensation all over Europe.

Chief Russian police spy abroad Harting was especially zealous. Litvinov had been crisscrossing Europe for five years, making his way into Russia, returning, running arms, and slipping through the fingers of the police time and again. Harting had received more than one reprimand. And was determined to put an end to it.

On October 31, 1907, police spies reported that Litvinov had been seen 12 days before in Kozlov on the Volga. The attached description was of a stocky man of medium height, red-haired, round-faced, wearing a pince-nez and a trimmed gingerish moustache. The police chief in Kozlov reported on December 2, 1907, that, having been alerted on November 2, he had obtained a picture of the said Litvinov, and set up a close watch at all railways stations and workshops. But in vain.

On November 14, Harting reported from Paris that Litvinov had arrived in Hamburg via Finland the week before.

But the police would not believe Litvinov had left the country. All secret agents in almost all the big cities were alerted. The dread of what the Bolsheviks could do, had addled the wits of the secret police. Its nervousness spread. It affected the Berlin police, which was eager to help its St. Petersburg colleagues. Contradictory coded messages kept coming from the German capital. One day the Berliners reported that Litvinov was domiciled in Berlin under the name of Turpayev. Next day they denied this and said Litvinov was in hiding in Germany as Turpov. What they did not know was that Petros Turpayev and Turpov were the names of one and the same person

who was helping Litvinov buy arms in Belgium.

Finally, on January 20, 1908, the Berlin chief of police reported that a man named Mirsky had been arrested a few months before, and that his identity had not yet been established. The Berlin police did not know that the man they were holding was Kamo. The message also said that according to a newspaper report Litvinov had been arrested a few days before in Paris. But the St. Petersburg police was not prepared to believe it. The search for him continued. Although all the efforts were, in substance, wasted. For the newspaper report had been correct: the French police did arrest Litvinov. And on confirming the news, the Russian police was jubilant. At long last, the elusive Bolshevik was behind bars. That he was in a French prison did not matter. The French were allies. Surely they would extradite Litvinov.

But what had happened? Why had Litvinov been arrested?

After the closure of the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn*, Litvinov had gone to Paris where, until the end of 1907, his affairs were interwoven in bizarre fashion with those of Kamo, or Semyon Arshakovich Ter-Petrosyan, whom Lenin described as a man of extraordinary loyalty, daring, and energy.

Did the Russian secret police know that Kamo had close connections with Litvinov? It did, but it did not know the particulars. Though in Harting's reports on Kamo the names of Litvinov and Krasin figured almost unfailingly. The police thought Krasin was the inspirer of Kamo's exploits, while they considered the "expropriations" in Tiflis and other cities to have been performed by Litvinov and Kamo.

The police used all the curse words it knew to describe Litvinov. It had the most agonising execution in mind for him if only he fell into its hands. And, characteristically, when Kamo was arrested, the Russian secret police did everything it could to prove that Kamo's offences were also Litvinov's offences.

Was this true?

When Litvinov said in his recollections that he had put his faithful friend Kamo aboard the gun-running yacht in Varna, he had said a lot and also very little.

Kamo had been one of Litvinov's few assistants when, by decision of the Third Party Congress, the latter was buying arms and sending them to Russia. In a message dated October 31, 1907, Harting reported to his superiors that Kamo accompanied Litvinov and his accomplices to Vienna, Sofia, and Varna, and that he had been aboard the foundered yacht. He wrote that the photograph of the

man arrested in Berlin, shown to detectives who had followed Litvinov and Kamo, was certified by them.

In connection with Kamo's arrest in Berlin, the special branch wrote to the Caucasus on February 16, 1908, that Litvinov was one of Kamo's closest associates.

The reports to this effect were many. And they were essentially true. Stomoniakov, who had played a prominent part in the gun-running, wrote in his memoirs that Kamo, who had a good knowledge of firearms, used to come to Liège, where he visited arms manufacturers. Yes, Kamo came to Liège with Litvinov. He also accompanied him to other cities in Western Europe.

What we should like to know, however, is whether or not Litvinov was involved in the "expropriation" of large sums in the Caucasus?

Let us turn to the documents. On October 27, 1907, police headquarters sent a top secret letter (No. 138786) to the secret police in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa. It said in part:

"We have information that a Georgian known as Kamo, and some 15 to 20 of his friends ... have organised a squad to carry out a major robbery. Kamo has learned that some 15 million roubles belonging to the government, of which 6 million in gold, are stored some place in Russia. The group has decided to 'expropriate' the money before January, even before December, and to take out only 3 or 4 million, owing to the weight of the money. To carry out the plan, they intend to buy a three-wheel motorcar abroad. The only ones who know of the plan are Litvinov and Krasin. Several thousand roubles have already been spent."

Orders were issued all over Russia to guard the banks round the clock. On October 19, 1907, Harting asked the police chief in St. Petersburg to send him three sets of photographs of Litvinov and the arrested captain of the gun-smuggling yacht, because he wanted to check in Vienna if Kamo had been with them. Harting wrote:

"I'll send copies of these photographs to the Berlin authorities without mentioning names, in order to establish whether Litvinov and Kamo had lived together last year in Berlin. In an indirect way, this should prompt the Germans to involve Litvinov in Kamo's case. To avoid endangering my agents, I cannot inform the German police directly that Litvinov had been in Berlin together with Kamo last year and this year."

The secret police, as we see, did everything it could to prove that Litvinov was directly involved in the expropriation. But that was not true.

The daring expropriation was carried out by Kamo under the

guidance of the Tiflis\* Committee of the RSDLP on June 13, 1907, downtown in broad daylight. Kamo and his friends expropriated a large sum of money for Party needs. Philip Maharadze, a Party veteran, wrote: "If Kamo and his group had done nothing more for the Party before or after the expropriation, this alone would have sufficed for us to remember him forever."

Where was Litvinov on the day of that daring operation? In 1907 he was in Russia repeatedly, on Party business, and returned to Germany, where he lived under the name of Goldenstein. The police got wind of this. Litvinov was seized and put in a Berlin prison. It was the most despicable and dirty prison he had ever seen. Owing to the public outcry raised by the Social-Democrat deputies in the Reichstag, Litvinov was soon released and left Germany. It follows that on the day of the expropriation, he was many thousands of kilometres away from Tiflis.

Now we have come to the concluding stage. The expropriated money was handed over to Litvinov abroad. Not the entire sum, however, but the 500-rouble banknotes that could not be used in Russia because their numbers were known to the police and all the banks in the country.

Litvinov worked out a plan for exchanging the banknotes. The biggest sum, 30,000, was to be exchanged in Paris. Litvinov planned to do it himself with Fanny Yampolskaya, who was doing many useful things for the Party at that time. Another 25,000 Litvinov planned to exchange in London. He intended to go to Britain for that purpose with Yampolskaya, and it was part of his plan to exchange 45,000 more in other parts of Europe, notably Switzerland.

The entire operation was to take one day—January 8, 1908. The money was stored in Paris at the home of Varvara Pisareva, who had been connected with the Moscow Committee of the RSDLP.

There was nothing to indicate that Litvinov's plan would fail. Harting was in tantrums. He and his many agents simply could not follow Litvinov's movements. He was a most cautious man. Not even his closest associates, the police spy reported to St. Petersburg, knew anything of his plans. He kept changing them every day and told no one of the details, and, besides, no one knew where the money was stored away.

How had Harting learned of Litvinov's operation? From the source that also informed him of Kamo. The agent who betrayed Kamo also betrayed Litvinov. It was Y.A. Zhitomirsky.

The tsarist police had done its utmost to recruit informers from

\* Tiflis—now Tbilisi, capital of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic.



among the Social-Democrats and to smuggle traitors into the movement. Malinovsky and Azef were at the top of the list. Zhitomirsky was another. He had left Russia at the turn of the century, and studied medicine in Berlin University. He took part in forming the Berlin group of the RSDLP. Soon, however, he became an informer of the Prussian police, and was handed over by it to the secret police of Russia. Zhitomirsky had important Party assignments, knew a number of languages, and took part in a few of the Party's congresses. And he informed—among other things, he informed the Russian secret police of Litvinov's gun-running, and it was only the latter's astounding ability to keep things under his hat that saved the operation from failure.

After Kamo's detention, Zhitomirsky did everything he could to prevent Litvinov from exchanging the 500-rouble banknotes, and to get him arrested. He let Harting know of the impending money exchange. The latter realised that it would be very hard to foil Litvinov's plan. And he appealed for help to the Tsar's ambassador in Paris. The latter officially requested the Paris authorities to detain Litvinov immediately.

All Russian police spies in the French capital and fifteen agents of the Paris police kept Litvinov under round-the-clock surveillance. It was not easy to keep on the expert Bolshevik conspirator's tail. He had suddenly changed his domicile. His helper, Fanny Yampolskaya, did the same. The police lost track of them.

Litvinov, who had noticed that he was being watched, managed to transfer the money to trustworthy hands. On January 4, 1908, he and Yampolskaya were to leave Paris for London. They had train tickets to the coast, where they would board a ship for Britain. Russian and French detectives with photographs of Litvinov were covering all railway stations. Nothing, it seemed, could prevent his arrest. But again Litvinov vanished, as he had done in Wilno, and St. Petersburg, and elsewhere.

Later that night, however, the police seized him and Yampolskaya. Litvinov was installed in Santé prison, Yampolskaya at Saint Lazare.

Harting was jubilant. He wrote a detailed account of how Litvinov was captured to his superiors. A passage from it is worth citing: "I take the liberty to add," Harting wrote, "that extraordinary effort was required to bring the affair to a happy end. I therefore most respectfully venture to hope that Your Excellency will permit me to cite those who took part, and have them decorated."

But the police jubilation was premature.

Paris newspapers relish a sensation. But January 1908 left a special mark. A spate of articles appeared after Litvinov's arrest. The papers

wanted to stun, frighten and fascinate their readers. They wrote of a Russian terrorist, of highjackings, and other such. It seemed Litvinov's extradition was a matter of days. But the rosy hopes of the Russian secret police burst like a bubble. Harting reported:

"As concerns Litvinov, who has been arrested in Paris, the French Ministry of the Interior informed the French Government about him and, despite vigorous remonstrances of the Paris police, ordered his release."

Why so? French Prime Minister Clemenceau, after all, had been inclined to extradite Litvinov. As Harting reported from Paris, he had learned from unofficial sources that Clemenceau had nothing against surrendering Litvinov. "I have learned this from a friend of the court investigator handling the case," Harting wrote. "He is well disposed towards Russia and willing to do what he can."

But Clemenceau's willingness to do Russia a favour was at odds with French law. Litvinov had not been in Russia during the so-called expropriation. He had taken no immediate part in it. As for exchanging the 500-rouble bills that Kamo had given him—this could not be proved.

The arrest of Litvinov and Yampolskaya created a stir in the press. The progressive papers said it was unfit for the country that had sent the Bourbons packing to persecute revolutionaries fighting a tyrant. The campaign for Litvinov's release was headed by Jean Jaurès, the socialist leader. On January 19, 1908, *l'Humanité* addressed an open letter to Justice Minister Aristide Briand:

"We protest and ask M. Briand by what right he arrested Litvinov and Yampolskaya? The Tsar's letter is not reason enough... It is high time the two were released."

The campaign gained momentum, and the French government decided not to aggravate relations with the popular socialist leader. But there was yet another reason for the Russian revolutionary's release—a diplomatic reason.

In 1908, when Litvinov was behind bars, an undercover struggle was underway within the European military alliances. Kaiser Wilhelm with his usual self-assurance continued to weave intrigues with the Russian Tsar, driving a wedge between Russia and the French and British.

The Russian Tsar did not trust his allies, and fell for the Kaiser's wiles. In July 1905, after tsarist Russia's crushing defeat at the hands of the Japanese in Manchuria, the two met in Björkö, Finland. Wilhelm offered the Tsar a treaty of alliance they had discussed the year before. And the Tsar signed an instrument that cast a cloud on the Russo-French alliance. Naval Minister Birilev initialled it without reading, since the Tsar asked him to. True, it was soon annulled under pressure of the Tsar's advisers. But Paris, well informed of the Tsar's

moves, no longer had faith in him. Nor were the French suspicions groundless. In August 1907, Wilhelm and Tsar Nicholas met again, this time at Swinemünde. A protocol was signed, under which Germany promised help in cancelling the Russo-Anglo-French convention which Russia had signed in 1856 after losing the Crimean campaign, pledging not to fortify the Alan Islands. This Russo-German stand in the Baltic caused displeasure in Paris and London. As usual in such cases, diplomats looked for an opportunity to let the other side feel they were in the know, and would retaliate. All that, of course, played into the hands of the emigré Russian revolutionaries.

On a cool January morning in 1908 a car pulled up outside Santé prison. An official of the Paris Prefecture alighted. He was carrying a file. The prison gates opened, and a man of about 30, of medium height, fairly plump, wearing a light overcoat and a hat, emerged.

Another car drove up a few minutes later. A policeman helped a pretty young woman to alight. She wore a cape and a then fashionable heel-length skirt. She walked over and stood beside the man at the prison gate.

The official bowed:

"Monsieur Litvinoff? Madame Yampolska?"

The couple nodded. He then pulled a paper out of his file and read the French Interior Minister's order releasing them. They were told to quit France at once.

"Thank you, monsieur, but our gratitude goes to Jean Jaurès rather than the French authorities. Are we free?"

"Yes. Madame Yampolska said she will go to Belgium. You, too, M. Litvinoff, must leave France without delay. Today would be fine. A sergeant of the police will escort you to the Belgian border. Where do you wish to go?"

"Britain, but not today."

"Why not?"

"I haven't any money. I must first earn the fare."

"That's up to the Interior Minister to decide."

Permission to stay on in France for a time was granted. Litvinov found a job with a shoemaker's. For a fortnight, he mended shoes, earned a sum of money, and even had minor surgery done in a private clinic. All he remembered before the anaesthetic took hold was that the surgeon used that minute or two to kiss the pretty nurse. To be sure, the surgery came off successfully.

A few days later, Litvinov, crossed the English Channel to London.

Thus began the Russian revolutionary's London period. It lasted for ten years.

## Chapter 5

### THE LONDON YEARS

In London Litvinov found lodgings in Camden Town. At first, he had wanted to rent any room in any part of the proletarian East End. But his friends advised him to pick Camden Town—a part of the city where railway and transport workers lived who were employed at King Cross and St. Pancras stations. The landlady didn't charge much and said that she would cook breakfast. She smiled sweetly, but added that the narrow bed was meant for one person only, and as for the rest, the lodger's personal life held no interest for her.

Litvinov accepted her terms and went to fetch his luggage. In the evening, when he returned, going up the stairs he saw a policeman on the landing above. The man looked closely at him, and walked down. Litvinov stopped, wondering what to do—go on to his room or apologise. ("Sorry, I must have come to the wrong house.") The policeman continued on his way down the stairs. Drawing level with Litvinov, he smiled, nodded, and went out. He was the landlady's husband. The idyllic hues of Camden Town faded at once. But, after some thought, Litvinov decided that a "personal" police guard was not necessarily a disadvantage.

In London, Litvinov didn't want to immerse himself in the comparatively quiet semi-bourgeois life led by some of the emigrés who were cowed by Stolypin's reign of terror in Russia and lost faith in the success of the revolutionary cause. The discomforts and hardships of emigré life contributed even more to this pessimism. The Russian colony in London was in a permanent state of depression.

The centre of emigré life in the early spring was on the premises of the German Workers' Cultural Association. Then, in 1910, the Russian emigrés established their own association, the Herzen Circle, with premises near the British Museum, on Charlotte Street. The club consisted of a small hall of unprepossessing appearance: gymnastic gear lay on the floor and along the walls. The emigrés often went there with their children, for there was no one they could leave them with at home. Various circles met on the premises, social parties and concerts were held. Fierce political arguments frequently flared up



about the future of the Russian revolutionary movement and the reasons for the defeat of the 1905-1907 revolution. The participants argued themselves hoarse, forgetting about the little children running about, about their worries, about everything else on earth.

Litvinov realised that he was stuck in London for a good many years. He had to think of earning a living. Friends said they would introduce him to a Feitelson. Feitelson always helped.

At the end of the 1890s, Wolf Feitelson had emigrated from Russia to Britain. He settled in London, and started a small business. But he failed to escape the crises that struck Britain's business world in those years. Time and again, he was reduced to peddling things in the streets, never shirked his work, and paid his debts bit by bit. Since only few bankrupt businessmen did so, Feitelson's honesty was noticed. *The Times* ran an article about him.

Commercial firms solicited his services. He accepted the offer of a reputable concern. Thus began his climb. Soon he moved into a modest mansion in London's aristocratic quarter.

Feitelson had no relation to the revolutionary movement and was worlds removed from Marxism. But he had a warm spot for Russian revolutionaries. Gradually, Feitelson's home became a sort of meeting place for Russian emigrés. It was here, in Feitelson's home, that Maxim Litvinov became a teacher of English in 1908.

Litvinov did not stay at the policeman's house long. Although it had its advantages, there were inconveniences too: his Party friends could not come and see him. They suggested he change his digs.

During those years, most Russian emigrés lived near Hampstead. Situated on a hill, the district was considered London's artistic quarter, the home of writers, artists, and other bohemians. At the beginning of the century, two-storey cottages surrounded with gardens had predominated there.

Litvinov was about to move to Hampstead, but things worked out otherwise. The little group of Bolsheviks decided to settle as a commune. This would brighten their emigré life and would be cheaper. For a comparatively small payment, they rented a furnished house in Ealing. The commune consisted solely of men, mostly young ones full of strength and energy, hardened and able to withstand the hardships of emigré life. The earnings were put into a common kitty. They did their own shopping at the market or in the shops, cleaned up, took their washing to the laundry, and cooked their own simple meals. Money was scarce. Their earnings were mostly casual. That is why they decided to have their own livestock, and bought rabbits and

poultry. They lived harmoniously and cheerfully. In the evenings, they strolled about the quiet little streets of Ealing, walked past the green kitchen-gardens to St. Paul's Cathedral and returned home late. London was asleep; in the peace of the night could be heard such words as "narodnichestvo", "Marxism", and "opportunism". The bobbies, as they listened to the unfamiliar speech, tried to understand what these Russians were arguing about.

The commune lasted a fairly long time, but broke up for reasons not as yet ascertained. Most likely, news got round of an impending police raid. In any case, they abandoned their Ealing house in quite some haste. The livestock was slaughtered the night before. A farewell feast was held, and they departed at daybreak.

Litvinov continued teaching, but did not manage to make ends meet. He was helped by his English friends, who found a job for him with the publishing firm of William and Norgate, which had extensive contacts with the European book market and undertook translations. Litvinov was to keep track of Russian, French, and German literature, submit notes and judgements on the books, and correspond with publishers in Russia, France, and Germany. After his much publicised deportation from Paris, his going to France and Germany was fraught with difficulties, but as an employee of a British publisher he could count on going there, and soon took advantage of the opportunity. The publishers, by the way, thought highly of him for his good knowledge of languages and his competent reviews.

Litvinov now moved into cheap furnished rooms in Mornington Crescent. No one ever visited him. He received books from France and Germany; they had to be looked through, read and reviewed, and there were also dozens of letters to be answered. He never had enough time and often brought whole stacks of books back from the office and sat over them till late at night. His sole entertainment in those years was the cinema. Sometimes of an evening he would drop into the small picture palace in the vicinity.

On Saturdays, Litvinov often went for a stroll in the quiet streets or visited the Klyshkos. Nikolai Klyshko, a professional Bolshevik revolutionary of Polish parentage, had emigrated from Russia and had long been resident in London. He had a job with Vickers, earned a decent salary, and married an English girl named Phyllis, tall, red-haired and very beautiful.

The Klyshkos lived on Hampstead High Street in the usual English flat of four rooms—two up, two down—connected by a staircase. Litvinov would bring a few bottles of his favourite beer. Phyllis would cook some steaks. So as not to involve her in Party affairs, Litvinov

and Klyshko talked Russian. The conversations lasted till midnight. Litvinov was already secretary of the London group of Bolsheviks and was in control of the Russian emigré organisations' ties not only with Russia, but with all the other Bolshevik colonies in Europe and America.

The international situation was grim. Signs of an approaching world war were ever more ominous. Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece made war jointly on Turkey in October 1912. The following year was highlighted by a new military flare-up, this time between Bulgaria and the coalition of Greece, Serbia, and Romania. Chauvinism held the Balkans tightly in its grip, and spread slowly but surely to the rest of Europe.

The European working class followed the developments with anxiety. It called for energetic action to halt the militarists. An extraordinary international socialist congress gathered in the autumn of 1912 in Basle. Its manifesto called on the workers to prevent a war, and "to depose the class rule of the capitalists" if war should break out after all.

But Lenin and the Bolsheviks were afraid that the right-wing Social-Democratic leaders in Europe would sell the workers down the river. Lenin knew most of them, had met them many times, talked and argued with them. He knew that some, like Jean Jaurés, would be consistent in their opposition to war. But he had no faith in Henry Hyndman, the British socialist leader, nor in Emile Vandervelde, the Belgian. Neither was he sure of the right-wing Social-Democratic leaders in Germany.

In the summer of 1913 Lenin came to Switzerland owing to his wife Nadezhda Krupskaya's ill health. She underwent surgery at Professor Koch's clinic in Berne. Lenin used the stay in Switzerland to deliver a series of lectures. On learning about this, Litvinov went to Geneva.

On July 10, Lenin was to lecture on the national question at the People's House. The hall was filled to overcrowding. Litvinov barely managed to elbow his way closer to the lecturer. Tatiana Fyodorovna Lyudvinskaya, member of the Party since 1903, who attended the conference, recollected:

"Litvinov arrived in a Russian blouse with a belt and gave the impression of being a typical professional Bolshevik. Lenin greeted everyone in a friendly way, was excited by the meeting, peered quizzically into the faces of the people there, and questioned them about the difficulties of their life and about comrades whom he had not seen for a long time.

"After his lecture, Lenin asked the comrades to make reports. He listened intently, took notes, asked questions, and tried to 'squeeze' everything out of them that they knew or ought to know about the situation in the countries they lived in. Lenin asked Litvinov to tell him in detail about the mood of the British working class and its leaders, and the situation in the International Socialist Bureau, with which Litvinov had already had occasion to deal.

"When all had spoken, Lenin took over and spoke about the decisions of the Basle Congress (of the Second International—Z. S.). He kept referring to the situation in Russia, and said that a war was imminent and it was time to think 'about our work in Russia', about the 'new conditions that can arise and for which we must prepare'.

"When the conference was over, Lenin secluded himself with Litvinov in a corner. This was one of the countless chats that Lenin had been having in Munich, London, Geneva, and Cracow—wherever he lived and worked. And, like many such talks, which concerned Bolshevik tactics and key issues of the revolution, this one was never recorded. They simply sat together and chatted, these two men of like mind: the forty-three-year-old Lenin, just a little tired, and the thirty-seven-year-old Litvinov, one of the fighters of his Party.

"As he took his leave, Lenin requested that he should be kept regularly informed about the situation in the London colony."

After Litvinov returned from Geneva, he was visited at Mornington Crescent by the Klyshkos. Litvinov had not been expecting them, no one ever visited him in those days, and he was visibly embarrassed and vexed that the Klyshkos had not warned him. Phyllis was shocked at the sight of the hovel in which he was living and at once invited him to move to their place in Hampstead. A "family council" took place, and Klyshko reaffirmed his wife's offer.

Having moved to High Street after some time, Litvinov immediately informed Lenin of his new address. A letter soon arrived. Lenin wrote that Litvinov had been appointed official representative of the RSDLP Central Committee in the International Socialist Bureau, and asked in what name the mandate was to be made out—Litvinov or Harrison, which was one of Litvinov's aliases. An important new stage was beginning in Litvinov's life. He was moving into the foreground as a political figure at international level.

In Autumn 1913, at Poronin, not far from Cracow, Poland, Lenin held a Central Committee conference with Party functionaries, at which the objectives of the Russian Social-Democratic movement were defined. The main slogans, as before, were a democratic republic, confiscation of landed estates, and an eight-hour working day. Resolutions were passed on the nationalities and other questions.



The decisions of the Poronin Conference were to be brought to the notice of the Social-Democratic parties of all countries immediately and presented to the ISB. Lenin asked Litvinov to organise in London the translation of the Central Committee's decisions into English, French, and German, and hand the texts to the ISB.

The session of the ISB in London, scheduled to open on December 1, was to be attended by all the leaders of the Second International and the Socialist parties of Europe: Jean Jaurès, Karl Kautsky, Camille Huysmans, Otto Bauer, Viktor Adler, Emile Vandervelde, Edouard Vaillant, and Rosa Luxemburg. Litvinov was to meet them in person. It became known that leaders of the Mensheviks and Liquidators<sup>28</sup> were about to descend on London at any time—Chkheidze<sup>29</sup>, Chkhenkeli<sup>30</sup>, Rubanovich<sup>31</sup>, Dneprov, and Semkovsky.<sup>32</sup>

After the Prague Conference of the RSDLP<sup>33</sup> in January 1912, the Liquidators made it a habit to come to the British capital. Having been defeated in Prague, they had picked London as a staging area for a counter-offensive.

At the ISB session, the Mensheviks and Liquidators intended to raise the question of what they termed the untenable state of the Russian Social-Democratic movement, and thus to mislead the European Socialist parties. Lenin instructed Litvinov to confront them.

The last autumn of peace in London before the World War was one of frequent fogs and rain. It was damp and uncomfortable. After moving in with the Klyshkos on High Street, Litvinov felt better and was almost free of the bronchitis from which he had been suffering recently. But life under the protection of Phyllis also had its inconveniences. A highly experienced conspirator, Litvinov carefully concealed his Party connections and his correspondence with the Foreign Bureau of the Bolsheviks. He was now receiving his mail on High Street, however, and Phyllis was not lacking in feminine curiosity; she looked too closely at the envelopes, and patronised her lodger too intrusively in other ways too. She would suggest a breakfast that Litvinov couldn't afford, or she would insist on checking his wardrobe and would try to make him buy a new coat when he only had small change in his pocket.

Litvinov got up early in the morning, tried to slip away unnoticed, went to cheap little pubs crowded with workers just off night shift and had his glass of ale and a slice of bacon. That was his breakfast. Then he would go to the Herzen Circle in Charlotte Street to get the latest news from Russia.

On November 28, Litvinov, as usual, got up early and was on his way to the door when Phyllis said, "There's a letter here for you, Maxim, but it's not from a woman, judging by the envelope. It doesn't smell of scent."

The letter was from Lenin in Cracow. Lenin gave him advice concerning his coming appearance at the Socialist Bureau, and wrote that he had sent a mandate made out to Maxim Litvinov stating that he was the official representative of the Bolshevik Central Committee of the RSDLP and instructed to represent the Party on the ISB.

Litvinov corresponded with Lenin before the sessions of the ISB and every day while they were in progress. The exchange of letters shows how Litvinov went about fulfilling Lenin's instructions. It produces a remarkably vivid picture of the events of those days. The Bolsheviks were locked in battle with the Mensheviks, the Liquidators, and opportunists from the Second International. The letters also show the part played by Litvinov, and his consistently Bolshevik position—evidence of the immense work he had done in his London period.

And so the letters. First, a letter to Lenin in Poronin, dated December 3, 1913:

"Have received both parcels—1) the minutes of the conference and 2) other documents and clippings.\* I understand from your letter that all documents, that is, the report and the attached resolutions, are being translated into German by Zagorsky<sup>34</sup> in Leipzig. What bothers me, however, is the sentence, 'Find a good German translator at all costs.' What for? I can't find such a translator here. Hence, I expect to get the German translation of the documents either from you or from Leipzig. I'm translating into English only... Have you sent the report and resolutions to Huysmans or should I do it? Why is it signed by Kamenev? Isn't it you who's on the Bureau? Will you send the mandate to me or directly to Huysmans? Call me Litvinoff, please, not Harrison. Who are the members of the Bureau? How many votes does our Party normally command? Had there been Letts, Bund representatives, and Mensheviks on it before? Or are they clamouring for representation now? Should I submit a written protest against representatives of the Menshevik Organising Committee or should I only protest in my speech? Does the representative of the Central Organ have a deliberative vote or does he attend as a mere correspondent?"

"It seems to me the resolution against Rosa L(uxemburg) is a

\* The reference is to the documents of the Poronin Conference, and other RSDLP Central Committee papers.

bit too harsh.\* It'll turn the Europeans against us. Couldn't it be toned down a bit—say, substitute *irreführen* (mislead) for *betrügen* (deliberately deceive)?

"I have not the slightest idea of Polish affairs. If there are clippings from Polish papers against the Main Board,\*\* send them to me please. Should I protest against the presence of the Seven\*\*\* or confine myself to a statement that they do not represent any Party faction?"

And the letter dated December 12, 1913, to Lenin in Poronin:

"Dear friend, have just received the mandate and your letter with Huysmans's notice. Have received the French translations from Nosov (?). The English translations are also ready. But nothing yet from Zagorsky. I hope he'll not hold matters up. Yesterday I looked for Huysmans at the Labour Party office, but he hadn't arrived. Left a note for him, saying we should meet. The Seven will be represented by Chkheidze, not Chkhenkeli. I learned about this from a notice about the lecture that the local Liquidators plan to hold jointly with the Bund on the nationalities question, with Chkheidze in the chair. I will, of course, fight for Plekhanov against the Mensheviks.

"Hope they'll let me speak. I am polishing my language in the German manner... Have gathered a considerable amount of material.

"Thanks for the newspapers from Petersburg. Germer\*\*\*\* will write for the *Pravda*. I'll cable on Sunday..."

Another letter to Lenin, dated December 13 or 14, 1913:

"Have received your letter with news from Vienna. Have also received the German translations from Leipzig. Chkheidze and Skobelev have arrived. They are going to open fire against me the day after tomorrow. But I'm not afraid, for all they have are firecrackers. They can't force me into anything. It is not likely that any resolution will be passed against the Six,\*\*\*\*\* though the claims of accidental failure to come, and loss of the letter, may cause smiles. I consider it a mistake that a member of the Six has not come. They may think he didn't dare. Haven't succeeded in catching Huysmans. He arrived today. But he did not turn up at the Labour Party office, where I left him a note. Phoned his hotel several times but he wasn't in. I'll try and go there myself..."

\* At an ISB sitting, in December 1913, Rosa Luxemburg submitted a proposal for the unification of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and was strongly criticised for this by Lenin.

\*\* The governing body of the Polish Party.

\*\*\* Menshevik members of the Fourth State Duma in Russia.

\*\*\*\* Germer—a Bolshevik, member of the London group.

\*\*\*\*\* The reference is to the Bolshevik members of the Fourth State Duma.

On December 13, 1913, Litvinov wrote to Lenin and Krupskaya their Cracow address:

"Dear friends, the story of yesterday's sittings was mailed to the *Pravda* by Germer today. Only an oblique mention of Russian affairs: that owing to the late hour the Bureau had adopted Kautsky's resolution without any discussion; that the Executive [of the ISB] should get in touch with the Russian organisations, and so on. You may add information that has come from me. If you wish, Germer is willing to write an article about the Bureau for the Central Organ.

"I suggest that the Committee of Organisations Abroad should collect material for the International about the trickery of the Liquidators. It would be a good thing to collect pearls from their literature (like the draft of a ruling on freedom of coalitions), translate them into other languages, and forward to all the more prominent members of the International, like Kautsky and others. The thing is to supply accurate facts only, giving the sources. I hope you'll agree. I'll arrange for the English translations here and forward them to Irving\* (who represents the British Socialist Party) instead of Quelch.\*\* Wrote you yesterday and this morning. I'm spoiling for a fight. Eager to come to grip with the Liquidators."

This was followed by one more letter dated December 13 and marked "Saturday, 2 p.m.":

"Dear friends, I'm writing at lunch-time. Rosa Luxemburg has not turned up. The question of unification will not arise, I think, unless someone else backs Rosa's proposal. Present here are Jaurès, Vaillant, Kautsky, and Otto Bauer... (Adler isn't around), Rakovsky (Romania), all the EC members, Rubanovich, Dneprov (Martynov), who asks to be called Dneprov in the press, Semkovsky, a Bund man, a Latvian, Chkheidze and Skobelev. These I have listed from memory. No Italians, and therefore also no Balabanova. Who will represent the Organising Committee, Dneprov or Semkovsky, is still unknown. They are still conferring. Plekhanov and Kamenev<sup>35</sup> were the only ones named during the roll-call. Chkheidze responded instead of them. I declared the faction (the Six) had elected someone else, not Chkheidze, and that the comrade had failed to arrive for accidental reasons. Huysmans said that under the Rules only the majority had the right to represent a faction. I retorted that I reserved the right to raise the issue again on another occasion (*bei einer anderen Gelegenheit*) because I do not want to start a discussion at this moment. That was the end of it for the time being. It would have been

\* A British Socialist Party leader.

\*\* A leader of the British Socialists.



awkward to open the conference with our squabbles. Huysmans said the vote would be divided between us and the Organising Committee.\* He said Plekhanov would have to disappear and that, in general, all Russian and Polish affairs should be settled between five and six o'clock. The Duma people are said to have brought a printed report of their faction. Dneprov and his companions are now trying to prevail on Kautsky that the Bureau should take action, elect a commission, and so forth. But Kautsky is standing his ground. He is critical of Rosa's sally against Lenin, and says we must make the workers in Russia demand unity, for nothing can be done from abroad.

"The Britons favour unity based on the British Socialist Party joining the Labour Party. A resolution was read yesterday that will be discussed at the Bureau the day after tomorrow. We'll write for the *Pravda* tonight. The premises are soon—damp and dark..."

Litvinov's next letter to Lenin and Krupskaya was dated December 14:

"Dear friends, everything occurred just as Huysmans had predicted: the Russian affair was disposed of between five and half past five. The decision to close the sitting at 5.30 p.m. had been taken beforehand. And the Russian affair was shifted to the bottom of the list, whereupon, owing to pressure of time, the speakers were cut short. Kautsky took the floor first to explain his resolution, a copy of which I am sending you. The International, he said, is poorly informed of Russian affairs. The reports and statements of the Russian organisations are one-sided. It is essential to obtain the judgement of some impartial institution, such as the ISB Executive. They expect it to gather representatives of all the factions and acquaint itself with their differences. If these differences will be too deep for reconciliation to be possible, the Executive will submit them for resolution to the Vienna Congress.

"After Kautsky's speech, the Bund man proposed that the resolution should be adopted without a discussion. The Bureau was about to accept this proposal, for it was time to close shop and go home, but Rosa Luxemburg asked for the floor ostensibly to retort to the Bund man. In fact, she objected to Kautsky's resolution. She said she was wholeheartedly in favour, but with one amendment: if the Bureau wished to begin unifying different parties 'by reason of the chaos', it was hopeless. The only thing that could be done was to restore the unity that already existed. For this reason, the Executive could not hope to address 'all Russian Social-Democrats', as Kautsky had put it, but only those organisations that had already been in the Party.

\* Since Plekhanov had not come to the ISB sitting, it was decided to divide his vote between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

She spoke softly and without ambiguities. The most important thing for her, it seemed, was not to admit the BSP. I was then allowed to have my say, but after five minutes the chair stopped me, saying the discussion cannot go on owing to the late hour. I managed to say a few words about the groups abroad, about the International being poorly informed, and said that while I sided with Kautsky's resolution, I thought it more expedient for the Executive Committee to offer its services first of all to the Duma factions and try to tone down the differences. Only then to the Central Committee, the Organising Committee, etc. Vandervelde said the Executive would take cognisance of my proposal and would, according to Rosa Luxemburg's suggestion, first get in touch with the parties represented on the Bureau. Then he put to the vote Kautsky's resolution, which was naturally adopted. Speaking on behalf of the Bund and the Latvians, Martynov declared his complete solidarity with Kautsky's resolution. Skobelev did the same on behalf of the factions. A complete mix-up. The delegates did not listen. The question of affiliation was raised. The Executive suggested letting the Organising Committee have Plekhanov's half-vote. I protested and submitted my own resolution with a short explanation. In doing so I shed a tear over Plekhanov's departure who, I said, would represent the future unity better than anyone else if only the Bureau so wished. I also made a statement about Chkheidze's mandate. The Executive's suggestion was naturally accepted. The secretary announced that a number of statements had come to hand in connection with the Russian affair. Everything would be attached to the minutes. And, naturally, I was not given an opportunity to set forth our proposal on the Polish question. The sitting was closed. Oh, yes, Jaurès was allowed to say how sorry he was that he was leaving the session with, as before, only a vague idea of the Russian affair. Rubanovich said that in keeping with the Amsterdam Congress resolution, they should also think of uniting with the Socialist-Revolutionaries, but no one was listening.

"In general, we can be pleased. The resolution envisages a fairly long procedure, and, besides, it can be easily discredited by references to the situation in which it was adopted, when even the representatives of interested parties were not given an opportunity to speak, and so on.

"The Liquidators ran around all day like poisoned mice, whispering to each other, putting their heads together, and writing, writing, writing. I could not make it out. Evidently, they wanted Kautsky to take their resolution (they wanted a special commission to be elected), but all they accomplished was for him to submit his own resolution. If he hadn't done it, Rosa Luxemburg would

have submitted one of her own, a worse one.

"Yes, Kautsky did not accept Rosa Luxemburg's amendments. He said the old party in Russia had ceased to exist, and it was a bad idea to restore it. The old organisations had changed. New ones had appeared.

"Plekhanov's letter stunned the Liquidators.

"He has helped the Six.

"That's about all. Sorry to be so incoherent. I'm rushing off to the railway station to mail the letter. If something is unclear or incomplete, do not hesitate to ask. I instructed Germer to make detailed notes, but he fell down on the job. He is writing you about all non-Russian affairs. He promised to send a report on today's sitting to the *Pravda* tomorrow, but don't depend on him and write it yourself. A report on yesterday's meeting has been sent off. I attach a copy of Plekhanov's letter. I'll mail all documents tomorrow or the day after. Huysmans promised to mail a copy of the Liquidators' statement from Brussels. I'll mail the Organising Committee's report tomorrow. They distributed a pamphlet on Russian affairs published, I think, in Basle, but no one aside from Kautsky looked at any Russian literature. I distributed all the documents you had sent me, including the sheet of the Warsaw Committee..."

On December 15, Litvinov wrote to Lenin and Krupskaya again:

"Dear friends, I was in a hurry yesterday to make the postal train. Sent you a telegram this morning. It was too late sending it last night. Now I will deal at greater length with the highlights of yesterday's sitting.

"There was nothing we could do. Everything had been arranged beforehand: to prevent a discussion, and to get by with a resolution on the desirability of unity, to give half a vote to the Organising Committee, and the parliamentary vote to the Seven (according to the Rules). The Bureau would have endorsed anything Kautsky proposed. In the afternoon, various questions surfaced on changing the representation in the Bureau and at the congress. Huysmans had had to say the Organising Committee had submitted a plea. It would be only fair, he said, to give Plekhanov's half-vote to the Org. Com. and the ISB. He expected everyone to agree with that. He wanted to go on to the next item on the agenda when I protested and asked for the floor. Kautsky said that if the question started a discussion, it should be dealt with along with other matters. That is what they did, and put it off until the very end. Plekhanov's letter had, naturally, simplified things for the Org. Com. by creating a vacancy. I can't tell if Plekhanov will have the sense to withdraw in time, but I assume he had been informed of the decision.

"The Russian affair was dealt with last, half an hour before the scheduled closing of the sitting, when people were already preparing to leave, and delegates had begun whispering to each other. I seemed to manage to win attention by raising my voice, but was soon stopped by Vandervelde. I managed to say that in general I sided with Kautsky's resolution (before the PPS amendment) and welcomed the International's readiness to look into the substance of our differences. This, I said, could be done only by raising the matter at a Congress, but that we had no intention whatever to enter into any agreement with "all Social-Democrats" (as Kautsky had said at first), let alone with the various Social-Democratic groups, namely, those that were abroad, etc. I said only the two currents that were at loggerheads in Russia should be reckoned with, and that I doubted that any agreement was possible between the Central Committee and the Organising Committee; I advised beginning with the Duma faction in order to prevent any widening of the split.

"I was not given a chance to retort to Rosa Luxemburg. She reprimanded Kautsky for burying the RSDLP by suggesting that the ISB should address itself to all the Social-Democratic movement and build a new party, although the party had been united only recently and should merely be restored. She swore that a new party in Russia could never be built (sic!). Kautsky replied that the Social-Democratic movement in Russia had not died, and that, on the contrary, it was stronger than ever, but that the former party, allegedly, was no more. His speech had sceptical overtones to the effect that the International was not strong enough to make anyone unite, and that only the Russian proletariat, if it so wished, was able to accomplish unification. The only thing that could be done was to register the differences, and to have a judgement about them when necessary. If, on the other hand, there were no major differences, and personalities obstructed unity, then, too, only the public opinion of the Russian proletariat could cope with them.

"He added that in his opinion our differences were less substantial than those within the German and French Social-Democratic movements. In general, his resumé was reminiscent of that of a British judge: either, or. He made a concession to Rosa Luxemburg by adding 'who recognise the programme of the Russian party' (which is non-existent!) after the words 'Social-Democrats'. He also adopted the amendment of the PPS, and I was naturally pleased. Let them try to reconcile Rosa with the PPS and the Bund. I think it would have been worse without Kautsky's resolution. Rosa would probably have submitted a more cautious and deleterious one. Considering the climate of indifference and the continuous looking at watches, they



would have passed any resolution so long as it mentioned unity. I wanted to make a few more amendments, but they did not let me, and pointed to the clock. I only managed to briefly motivate our opposition to the affiliation of the Organising Committee and read out a declaration on the Duma faction. Kautsky's resolution was adopted unanimously.

"What I haven't remembered to say, you will now be able to obtain when Huysmans addresses you.

"The Liquidators' statements (a whole pile of them, most probably objections to our report) were not made public. Ask Huysmans for them or, if you like, I'll ask him.

"They fussed about endlessly both days... If you want my by-line for the *Pravda* report, put Litvinov...

"That seems to be all. I'd like to know what you think of the results, that is, of Kautsky's resolution..."\*

Litvinov's performance at the session of the International Socialist Bureau yielded good results. Certainly, it was more than he could do to sway the leaders of the Second International into backing the anti-war line of Lenin and his followers. But the documents of the Poronin Conference, coupled with Litvinov's own interventions at the session and his talks with some of the delegates, helped convey the true facts about the situation in the RSDLP to many European Social-Democratic parties.

But there was still a lot to be done in that respect.

In the spring of 1914, William and Norgate gave up publishing translated books, and Litvinov lost his job. The publishers said they regretted losing so competent a reader, but had no other choice.

In April, the matter of Litvinov's dismissal from the publishing house was settled for good. This was unfortunate. A congress of the International Socialist Bureau was about to open in Vienna, and, as resolved at the London conference, it would examine the Russian affair. In general, Huysmans was right when he told Litvinov that the Russian question would be squashed. But this was not easy to accomplish. Neither Huysmans, nor Kautsky, nor Vandervelde, nor any other leader of the Second International, or the lot of them together, could simply "write off" one of the biggest working-class parties that had, moreover, carried out a revolution (the First Russian Revolution of 1905 — *Tr.*) which had evoked a worldwide response.

\* Lenin commented on Kautsky's resolution in an article entitled, "A Good Resolution and a Bad Speech" (V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1977, pp. 528-530).

The Russian question was put on the Vienna agenda to ostensibly demonstrate the wish to help the Russian working class. And Lenin felt that the opportunity should be used to let the public know the Bolshevik view of the situation in the Party. He therefore insisted that Litvinov should attend the congress, knowing that he would cope with the job and would, besides, provide exhaustive, discerning, and objective information about it.

Litvinov was aware that he would have to go, and prepared for it, collecting facts for his speech, and following all developments in the Social-Democratic parties. But that did not mean he was eager to go to Vienna, for he did not expect any good to come of the congress. Besides, he did not have the requisite cash.

After a while, he let Lenin know about it. "Dear friend," he wrote, "I'm afraid I shan't be able to go to Vienna. Can't take a vacation because my term of employment runs out in three weeks. I'll be free in June and July—free of all money, too. It follows that I cannot afford the trip. You are better informed about the safety aspect. I think I'd be safe enough. Frankly, I have no wish to sit alongside old man Axelrod. There is no such thing as equality of Bureau members. Some can do anything, others can't. Out of all of us Bolsheviks you alone would have influence in the Bureau. There will be arguments and a divergence of votes. Will there be any conference on the Russian question at the ISB Executive? I would conquer my personal disinclination if it were necessary, but let me repeat, it is impossible owing to hard cash..."

The Commission for Russian Affairs was dragging its feet. It was still not known exactly when the conference in Vienna would open. Litvinov was discharged from the publishing house at the end of May, and immediately accepted an offer from a London tourist office. A few days later he left for Brussels, where he was to take charge of a group of Russian teachers on a tourist trip. They would first tour Belgium, then leave for France, and from there for England. This was convenient for Litvinov. He assumed that from France he would manage to go to Switzerland for a few days, where he wanted to meet his friends and make arrangements with Kuklin's Library about literature for his London organisation of Bolsheviks.

Litvinov arrived in Brussels in early June. The tourist party was a small one, mainly of teachers from various provinces. For several days, Litvinov conducted the tourists round Brussels, showed them the museums, the town hall, and the parks, went with them to Liège, and from there intended to leave for France. But the shot at Sarajevo broke up the peace. The First World War had begun. With

great difficulty, Litvinov sent his disappointed tourists across Sweden to Russia, and himself returned to London.

In the British capital crowds of people in the streets gave a rapturous welcome to the soldiers. Blaring bands, cheers, flowers—that was London at the time. The newspapers whipped up chauvinist frenzy. The Socialists in Belgium, France, and Britain joined the governments of their countries.

The situation on the front lines was developing unfavourably for the Allies of the Entente Cordiale. The Germans were rolling on towards the Marne. They were beginning to threaten Paris. At the cost of enormous losses the Russian armies in the east drew off several German army corps. The war became positional.

The press kept whipping up patriotism over the boys in the trenches. At first, this seemed to help. Then people grew accustomed to it. A spy craze began. Spies were seen everywhere—among refugees, among Englishmen who happened to have lived for some time in Germany, and among the Russian emigrés.

The war created a mass of complications for the Russian colonies in Europe and severed communications between them. Many emigrés left for America. Some made their way to Scandinavia. All was quiet there. In the British Isles and in neutral Switzerland, the Russian colonies grew rapidly in size. Many Russian political emigrés headed there from France, Belgium, and other countries on the continent. Georgy Chicherin and other prominent Russian revolutionaries arrived in London from Belgium.

Chicherin was already widely known in the European working-class movement. His brilliant education, his versatility and other qualities quickly brought him great popularity in emigré circles and in British society.

Were Litvinov and Chicherin acquainted before Chicherin's arrival in London? Needless to say, they had been so for some time, since about 1904. But their meetings were few and far between. In 1906 in Belgium, then again in Paris. Now they met once more. This time they lived in the same city, and were able to associate for four years. They saw each other fairly often at the Herzen Circle where they discussed world affairs. The Bolsheviks were glad to notice that the war and the betrayal of the leaders of the Second International had prompted Chicherin to revise his views. Gradually, he began to gravitate towards the Bolshevik outlook.

In those early years of the war, Chicherin and Litvinov also met from time to time at Feitelson's. On Sundays, the London businessman gave big dinners for fifteen to twenty guests. English people also used to look in.

These dinners had no element of English stiffness. There were noisy debates in the dining-room and the political news was loudly discussed. The guests gathered slowly. Those who came late were served soup while those who had come earlier were already having the dessert. This prompted lots of wisecracks.

Once, during the usual dinner a very motley company happened to assemble in Feitelson's flat. At the appointed hour, as usual, all sat down at the table, but the voices of three debaters who were passionately discussing international affairs could still be heard coming from the host's study. They belonged to Chicherin, Litvinov, and an Englishman named Simon\*. The offended hostess could not stand it any longer and said to her guests in a loud voice, "To listen to those young men, you would think they were foreign ministers!"

It never occurred to Mrs. Ida Feitelson that these words were prophetic in the case of all three.

Soon after the outbreak of war, the tsarist government, asserting its rights as an ally, demanded that Britain should send Russian subjects back home for call-up into the army. The military authorities ordered all Russian emigrés to report. Litvinov was also summoned. The English officer who questioned him for a long time about his past, and so on, was about to complete the formalities for Litvinov's despatch, but realised that Litvinov would be under threat of a tsarist trial, and let him go. As it was, no Russian emigré was in fact sent from England to Russia to die for the Tsar, owing this to the influence of the Labour Party.

Since the tourist agency had closed down, Litvinov had to find another job. It wasn't easy. A stream of refugees flooded in from Belgium in the first weeks of the war, and the British government arranged for them to be given job priority as victims of the German invasion. Litvinov got himself fixed up with great difficulty as a commercial traveller for a firm selling agricultural machinery.

The war created many a new problem. Preparations began for a conference of the Socialists of the Entente countries at the end of 1914. Mensheviks and Socialist-Revolutionaries were invited to represent Russia. The Bolshevik group in London protested. It pointed out that the Mensheviks had not been authorised by anyone, and their presence would be contrary to the will of the workers in Russia. Lenin held that the least opportunity to expose the oppor-

\* Sir John Simon (1873-1954), British Foreign Secretary from 1931 to 1935.



tunists should be used, and asked Litvinov to speak at the conference.

In early January 1915 it became known that the conference would gather in London not later than the first week of February. Lenin sent Litvinov the draft of a Bolshevik declaration which he was to make public at the conference.

Like all Russian emigré revolutionaries Litvinov lived from hand to mouth. On February 4, 1915, the *Times* printed a Russian Herzen Circle account concerning contributions in aid of Russian revolutionaries. The Military Fund for Aid to Russians contributed £170, and the New York Aid Fund £20.10.8. Further down the list were contributions from private persons: the well-known actress Lydia Yavorskaya (Princess Baryatinskaya) who was stranded in London owing to the war, contributed £430.11.4, that is, the proceeds from performances of *Anna Karenina* on her British tour; Fanny Stepnyak, widow of the famous Russian revolutionary Narodnik Stepnyak-Kravchinsky £3.15; Nikolai Klyshko £1.10; Mrs. Rothstein, wife of Fyodor Rothstein, later one of the founders of the British Communist Party and future Soviet plenipotentiary in Iran, then member of the Soviet Foreign Commissariat's collegium and member of the USSR Academy of Sciences 10 shillings, and, lastly, Litvinov 2 shillings.

As honorary secretary of the Herzen Circle, Litvinov publicly reported to the *Times* all previous contributions and made the following announcement: "The total sum collected by January 31 was £663.9.6. The Committee of the Herzen Circle sends its sincere thanks to all who made these contributions. Subsequent donations may be sent to Mme Fanny Stepnyak at Carlton House Terrace, Childs Hill. N.W."

In the evenings at the Charlotte Street club, the semi-starved emigrés were served coffee, buns and sandwiches prepared by Rothstein's wife, Anna. As usual, they argued deep into the night.

On February 14, 1915, the conference of the Socialist parties of the Entente countries opened. Litvinov found himself in a highly embarrassing position. As a representative of the Bolsheviks, he had not been invited. This had been done intentionally, so as to gag the Russian internationalists. Lenin's assignment was in jeopardy. So Litvinov did what he would do years later at the League of Nations and at international conferences whenever it was vitally necessary to make the Bolshevik standpoint known to the world at large: he turned up without an invitation, demanded the right to speak, and when the flabbergasted chairman tried to prevent him from making his address, Litvinov simply went to the platform and began speaking.

He was not allowed to finish, but the Bolshevik position was made clear to the delegates.

Here is what Litvinov made public:

#### DECLARATION OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE RSDLP AS PRESENTED TO THE LONDON CONFERENCE

Citizens, your conference calls itself a conference of the Socialist Parties of the belligerent Allied countries of Belgium, Britain, France, and Russia. Allow me first of all to draw attention to the fact that the Social-Democratic Party of Russia, as an organised whole represented by the Central Committee and affiliated to the I[nternational] S[ocialist] Bureau, has received no invitation from you. The Russian Social-Democrats, whose views have been expressed by members of the Russ[ian] S[ocial] D[emocratic] Labour Faction in the Duma, arrested at the present time by the tsarist government (Petrovsky, Muranov, Samoilov, Badayev, and Shagov—representing the workers of the St. Petersburg, Yekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Kostroma, and Vladimir gub[ernias]) have nothing in common with your conference. We hope that you will announce this publicly so as not to be subjected to the accusation of having falsified the truth.

Permit me now to say a few words on the goal of your conference, that is, to say what the politically conscious Social-Democratic workers of Russia have been expecting of you.

We think that before entering into any discussion of the problem of restoring the International, before trying to restore the international ties between the Socialist workers, our Socialist duty compels us to demand:

- 1) That Vandervelde, Guesde and Sembat should immediately leave the bourgeois ministries of Belgium and France.

- 2) That the Belgian and French Socialist Parties should break the so-called "national bloc" which is a renunciation of the Socialist banner and serves as cover for the orgies of chauvinism being practised by the bourgeoisie.

- 3) That all the Socialist Parties should abandon their policy of ignoring the crimes of Russian tsarism and should renew their support for the struggle against tsarism of the workers of Russia, who do not shrink from any sacrifice whatever.

- 4) That in fulfilment of the resolutions of the Basle Congress, it should be announced that we are offering our hand to those revolutionary Social-Democrats of Germany and Austria who re-

plied to the declaration of war by preparing propaganda of revolutionary action. The voting of war credits must be unconditionally condemned.

The Social-Democrats of Germany and Austria have committed a monstrous crime against Socialism and the International by voting war credits and concluding a "civic peace" with the Junkers, priests, and bourgeoisie, but the Belgian and French Socialists have behaved no better. We fully understand that circumstances are possible when the Socialists, being in the minority, are forced to submit to the bourgeois majority, but under no circumstances should Socialists cease to be Socialists and join the chorus of bourgeois chauvinists, or forget their working-class cause and join bourgeois ministries.

The German and Austrian Socialists are committing a great crime against Socialism when, following the example of the bourgeoisie, they hypocritically assert that the Hohenzollerns and the Hapsburgs are waging a war of liberation "from tsarism".

But no less a crime is being committed by those who say that tsarism is becoming more democratic and civilised, who evade the fact that tsarism is strangling and destroying unhappy Galicia exactly as the German Kaiser is strangling and destroying Belgium—and those who are silent about the fact that the tsarist gang has thrown into prison the parliamentary representatives of the working class of Russia and only recently condemned several Moscow workers to six years' penal servitude merely for belonging to the S[ocial]-D[emocratic] Party; that tsarism is oppressing Finland worse than before, that the workers' papers and the workers' organisations in Russia have been closed down, that the thousands of millions of roubles required to continue the war are being wrested by the tsarist clique from the starving peasants and destitute workers.

The workers of Russia hold out a hand of comradeship to the Socialists who are taking action, like Karl Liebknecht, like the Socialists of Serbia and Italy, like the British comrades from the Ind[ependent] Lab[our] Party and several members of the British Socialist Party, and like our arrested comrades from the Russ[ian] S[ocial]-D[emocratic] Lab[our] Party.

We call you to this path, the path of Socialism.

Down with the chauvinism that is destroying the proletarian cause! Long live international Socialism!

In the name of the CC of the Russ[ian] S[ocial]-D[emocratic] Labour Party,

M. Maximovich

London, 14 Feb[ruary] 1915

On February 19, Litvinov sent Lenin and Krupskaya a detailed account of the conference:

"Dear friends, you have probably received my registered letter and the newspaper clippings about the conference. I have seen none of the people at the conference. All I know is that the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries (Chernov and Natanson) did not vote for the resolution. According to Natanson, the Labourites, too, were disinclined to vote, but Vandervelde had 'so touchingly pleaded, with tears in his eyes, for them to save Belgium, that the Englishmen couldn't help themselves'. No, the Labourites are unreliable allies and we are sure to part ways with them soon. They want the International convened together with the Germans and Austrians, but the BSP is rather in favour of a private and secret conference of just 'certain people'. They even consider Sunday's conference too official. They have evidently decided to hush up my withdrawal, but all the papers referred to the irreconcilable attitude of the Russian Social-Democrats. *Justice*, however, confused us with the Socialist-Revolutionaries; it mistakes the Left Socialist-Revolutionaries for the RSDLP. I'll send a note to *Justice* about it. Our declaration is printed neither in *Justice* nor in the *Labour Leader*. Sending you a few copies of my declaration. Have sent copies to America, the International Socialist Bureau, and Alexander<sup>36</sup> in Holland. There's a strong movement in the BSP against the policy of its leaders (Hyndman & Co). There had been a series of local conferences. The one in London was anti-chauvinist and censured the Central Committee and *Justice*. The results of the provincial conferences are still unknown. But the resolutions are probably worse than that of the Londoners. When you'll write to the Central Organ about the conference, don't forget to say the Central Committee of the Latvian Social-Democrats sided whole-heartedly with our declaration. Berzins will probably have to fight Braun on this score, but formally Berzins was the only one to represent the Central Committee. Let me know what you think of the conference. If I had known the agenda beforehand, I should have begun the declaration by dealing with it item by item, and would then have been able to read all of the declaration..."

On March 29, 1915, in the *Sotsial-Demokrat*, Lenin printed an article on the London conference, exposing the social-chauvinists who had betrayed the working class. He lauded Litvinov: "The declaration we are publishing made by Comrade Maximovich, representative of the Central Committee of the RSDLP, gives full expression to the views of the Party on this conference... Comrade Maximovich carried out his task in speaking specifically about the *treachery* of the German Socialists."



Only one truthful voice about the imperialist war was heard at the London conference. It was the voice of Litvinov, who had attended, on Lenin's instructions, to make public the anti-war declaration of the CC of the RSDLP.

After the London conference, Litvinov toured all the colonies of Russians in Britain and made speeches on the Party's new tasks. Lenin wanted him to expose chauvinists of all calibres, and asked him to publish his pamphlet, *Socialism and War*, in London.

On July 28, 1915, Litvinov wrote to Lenin and Krupskaya in Switzerland:

"Dear friends, I have received your letter of the 20th and have given Alexander (Shlyapnikov—Z. S.) £41 sterling on the basis of your power of attorney.... I would advise you to publish the pamphlet\* in English in the United States, it's a risk in England and, what's more, will cost a lot of money. I feel very pessimistic about our European sympathisers, the so-called left opposition. They won't stay long by our side until events give them a push or, rather, pull them along in their train. Let me know the size of the pamphlet and the number of copies, and I will send you an estimate."

The Party's financial affairs in London and the skimpy funds of Lenin and Krupskaya, which they had been paid for their writings, were also being managed by Litvinov. He disposed of them on Lenin's instructions.

Life was becoming more and more difficult for the Russian colony in London: the police were watching every move of the Russian emigrés.

In the summer of 1915, Phyllis Klyshko was summoned to the police station, where they asked her about her lodger. The chief, Basil Thompson, questioned her at length about Litvinov—what places he frequented, whom he met, what he talked about, and who came to see him. Phyllis said that she had not noticed anything reprehensible about Litvinov and that he was in general a fine man, very punctilious and polite. Not only was Phyllis in the dark about Litvinov's Party activities, but she did not even know that her husband was a Bolshevik and that he had a Party code name.

The chief of the CID let Phyllis go. Then two civilians in identical navy blue suits and identical hats turned up at the Klyshkos' flat. They took Litvinov away to the station, where Thompson questioned him about who visited Klyshko. Litvinov replied not very amiably that he had been living at the Klyshkos' for two years and had been availing himself of political asylum in England for seven years. As far

\* The reference is to Lenin's *Socialism and War*.

as he knew, the granting of political asylum to emigrés was fully in the spirit of British democracy. Thompson did not say anything, and then went over to the main reason why Litvinov had been sent for. He began questioning him about his correspondence with Lenin and about the activities of the Bolshevik group. Litvinov realised at once what this was about: the police department had not given up its intention of forcing the Bolsheviks to leave London. He told Thompson that he was not violating any wartime regulations, and that he would inform the MPs about the interrogation.

Thompson let Litvinov go, hinting that their conversation was not over. Litvinov wrote about the interrogation to Lenin at Sörenberg near Lucerne, where Lenin and Krupskaya were living at the time:

"Dear friend, I received your postcard yesterday, that is, on the 11th day (...) I was sent for by the chief of the local police and questioned about my views, my past, and my correspondence with you."

Lenin replied at once, but this time, too, the letter was very late arriving. Then their correspondence stopped entirely for a time. Litvinov wrote to Berne, where Lenin and Krupskaya proposed to move from Sörenberg, but the letters were returned to the sender.

Litvinov was alarmed. He was beset on all sides by difficult problems, and he needed Lenin's advice and support as never before.

Towards the end of the summer of 1916, a postcard at last arrived from Lenin. He wanted news about the ISB and asked Litvinov to send him the addresses of certain comrades who had left for England after the outbreak of war. He mentioned that Krupskaya had fallen ill.

Litvinov immediately wrote back to Lenin in Zurich:

"I was extremely glad to receive your postcard. I have been feeling cut off from you. Wrote you at Shklovsky's address in Berne, but the letters came back marked 'Addressee Unknown'. Distressed to hear of Krupskaya's illness.

"You will learn about matters here from the newspapers, no doubt. There is not the slightest hint of Zimmerwald here. I am not taking part in the work of the section. Nor is there any work being done. We are all living here under the sword of Damocles. There will probably be no expulsions, but the troubles are going to be considerable. The Berzins are in America and will write to you from there.

"Write, and tell me how things are. Warm greetings to you and Krupskaya."

In the late autumn of 1916 public opinion in London, St. Petersburg, Paris, and other European capitals was aroused by the "peace

proposals" that Chancellor Theobald Bethman Hollweg of Germany had made to the Entente. The Allied press wrote of Kaiser Wilhelm's Sedan: Germany's defeat was a foregone conclusion; clearly, the Kaiser and his generals wanted to save the country from surrender and defeat, thus to retain strength for a war of revenge.

The German move was strongly rebuffed in the Allied capitals. The London *Morning Post* wrote that a cease-fire at that moment would be a betrayal of civilisation. The Allies, it said, should remember their responsibility for sparing future generations the horrors of war.

The Kaiser's manoeuvre and the Allied response eliminated any remaining doubts as to the predatory nature of the war. Lenin requested the Bolshevik groups abroad to supply him information about the mood in the belligerent countries. Litvinov sent him extracts from the London papers. Alexandra Kollontai<sup>37</sup> wrote to Zurich, suggesting an international teachers' conference to which friends from the Russian colony in London could be invited. Litvinov started organising a delegation, but it did not reach its destination.

In 1916, a big event occurred in the life of Maxim Litvinov: he married Ivy Lowe, a young English writer. It had been an uneasy decision for him to make. He was forty, but still ruled out any thought of a family because of his unsettled life. Yet his friends kept prompting him, and jested about his bachelor's life. One of his close friends once asked Litvinov "Are you going to get married one of these days, Maxim?" Litvinov unexpectedly replied, "Yes, soon. But she's a bourgeoisie." A few weeks later, he married the "bourgeoise", and lived a happy 35 years with her.

They had met at a friend's house. Then at a gathering of the Fabian Society. Litvinov was impressed by her knowledge of Tolstoy and Chekhov. Putting on weight, red-haired, of average height, well-mannered, and not very talkative, he made a big impression on the young writer. Her mother, the daughter of a colonel in the British Army, naturally wanted a different match for her daughter and certainly did not want to see her married to an insecure emigré from Russia. As for his religious background, Ivy Lowe simply never gave it a thought. She was herself from a family of Hungarian Jews who had taken part in the Kossuth<sup>38</sup> uprising; in her girlhood she had been a Protestant, then had been converted to Catholicism. The choice of religion was her private affair and concerned no one else.

Financial worries were making themselves felt. Ivy Lowe had some small savings, earned by writing. Litvinov continued working as agent for a firm selling agricultural machinery. But he had to find additional earnings. Ivy was expecting a baby.

The Litvinovs settled in South Hill Park, in a house belonging to Belgian refugees. Friends sometimes gathered there in the evenings to discuss the political news; then an argument would flare up, developing into a fierce squabble. It always seemed to Ivy that her husband and his guests would any moment start flinging chairs at one another. At the very height of the dispute, when it was almost at boiling-point, she would leave the kitchen, go into the room, and announce that tea or coffee was ready. The disputants would calm down and drink their tea in peace.

Ivy Lowe, now Ivy Litvinova, was not interested in and did not understand the political activities of her husband and his friends. To her, it was an alien world. In London, after the October Revolution, she asked her husband if he knew Lenin. Maxim replied that he had known Lenin for a long time. But she had no idea that letters from Lenin were coming to their house and that her flat was the headquarters of Bolshevik emigrés.

It was nearing the end of 1916, the third year of the world carnage. At the fronts, they went on killing, maiming, mangling people, destroying cities and human hopes. The Paris and London newspapers called for new efforts to put an end to the Kaiser's army. In Russia the papers said the best reply to the Kaiser's peace offer was to subscribe to the war loan. They reported the appearance of flying machines over the battlefields.

The public read the despatches from the front with excitement. Their nature was determined not by the talent but by the mood of the war correspondents. The twenty-five-year-old Ilya Ehrenburg wrote in an article, "Russia in Champagne", published in the *Birzhevyye Vedomosti* of December 19: "There have been rains. The calm, grey-green Marne is in spate, and the little streams have flooded the meadows; here and there, now the top of a fence, now a scarecrow stands up out of the water. I am travelling north, into the interior, into the heart of Champagne. It is a mild autumn day; a weak and timid ray of sunlight breaks through the fluffy clouds. In the west are hills with terraced vineyards, and beyond them is Reims...

"A few minutes later, I wander round the little streets of M. It is a big village, partly destroyed by the Germans... It's like being in a traditional Russian village: everywhere there are inscriptions in Russian, even on the shops. Everywhere you see Russian faces and hear Russian speech... Soldiers crowd into a shop in which beer, sugar, sausage, and bananas are on sale.

" 'We're from different places,' the soldiers explain, 'so there's



people from Livny, and people from Yelets, and that one over there is pure Voronezh. We were tossed about on the sea for eighteen days, I thought I was going to give up my soul to my Maker, but we got here in the end..."

"We went to a little Russian chapel, recently built. The Mother of God looked down at us tranquilly from the wall... Lessen my grief... Like the prodigal son, I refuse to think either of the past or the future, either of Paris or of Spain, and keep saying, Father I have sinned."

In St. Petersburg at the Alexandrinsky Theatre the comedies of Prince Sumbatov were being performed. Rachmaninov was giving recitals, and a St. Petersburg newspaper critic wrote that in his music one heard 'the tread of a soldier going into battle'. But it was not St. Petersburg's Nevsky Prospekt that determined the state of war-torn Russia, nor did the reports from the front say anything about the nation's hopes and aspirations. A new revolution was brewing. Already imminent was the downfall of a regime built on the blood and tears of the people, a regime against which Lenin and his Party had been stirring Russia up for 20 years.

Litvinov saw in the New Year of 1917 at his flat. His closest friends had come. They sat at table looking solemn and a little sad. They were thinking about Russia. About the future. Big Ben struck midnight in the distance. And all looked at their pocket watches. The New Year had arrived. It came inaudibly, and no one could yet foretell the thunderstorms it was going to bring. They talked of prisons escapes, and rendezvous. Then they remembered that they were gathered at Litvinov's home for the first time since he had been married. All shouted "Bitter! Bitter!" making Litvinov and Ivy kiss to sweeten the "bitter" drinks as the Russian custom demands of newlyweds.

The Russians sat for a long time that night in London at 86 South Hill, in the flat of Litvinov, secretary of the Bolshevik group. Someone said, "Maxim, if there should be a revolution over there, back home, you will be ambassador of the Russian Republic in England."

The new year, it seemed, had changed nothing. Recruits were still being sent from London to France and Salonika. The newspapers wrote that the majority of the population in all the Allied countries preferred to step up the sacrifices they were making, but would not submit to a premature peace with Germany. The Germans were being told, on the other hand, that the war would be won. The burghers now prayed not only for the Kaiser, but for Hindenburg as well. In Berlin and other cities, they made nails with golden heads to be hammered into a wooden statue of Hindenburg. They believed that

when the wooden Field Marshal was covered with gold, Germany would win the war.

In mid-February, Litvinov drove his wife to hospital, and on the night of February 17, she gave birth to a son. The Middlesex Registry Office recorded the event strictly according to the rules, indicating that the father of the child, who was named Mikhail, was a Russian emigré, translator Maxim Litvinov, and the mother was Ivy Lowe, a British subject.

Litvinov was now dividing his time between the hospital and the Herzen Circle, where news was awaited with impatience. But only meagre information came from Russia. Litvinov met Labour MPs and tried to find something out from them. They either shrugged their shoulders or said, "Russia is a loyal ally. Of course, there are many malcontents there, but all of them want victory." Then, news from Russia stopped coming in altogether. Something was happening there.

On March 16 (New Style) the thunderstorm broke. Litvinov was at home when friends came rushing in with newspapers. A week before, the revolution had made the Tsar abdicate! Litvinov went to the Houses of Parliament and demanded an immediate interview with Lloyd George. He was unable to meet the Prime Minister, however, and asked Labour MPs to announce the news of the revolution in Russia.

On that day, Zeppelins raided London. Litvinov hurried to the Russian Embassy and demanded of the ambassador, Nabokov, that he should immediately take down the portrait of Tsar Nicholas II and the tsarist coat-of-arms from the embassy building. The portrait and coat-of-arms were removed.

When Litvinov arrived at the club in Charlotte Street, there was pandemonium inside. Emigrés had arrived with their children and were embracing and congratulating one another. On the next day, congratulatory telegrams began arriving from the Russian colonies in Switzerland, France, Norway, Sweden, and Denmark. The Russians were jubilant. In the evening, they left the club in Charlotte Street for a stroll round nocturnal London. On Regent Street, they sang songs, danced, embraced, and shouted "Hurrah!" With mixed feelings of fear and bewilderment, passers-by looked at the deliriously overjoyed Russians and decided that the Kaiser must have surrendered. It was explained to them that a different Kaiser had surrendered, the Russian one, and forever.

On the next day, Litvinov, inspired by the course of events, dictated his notes to his wife, heading them, *From the Diary of a Russian Emigré*.

Here they are:

"March 17, London.

"I went to bed yesterday much excited. The news I have had seems to have opened the flood-gates in my brain. The stream of thoughts would not let me sleep all night. I could not stay in bed and jumped out at six in the morning, burning with impatience to see the papers as soon as possible. Is this really the People's Revolution? The lines of newsprint danced before my eyes. In my joy, I could not force myself to read everything consecutively, so I skipped to the end of the paragraph, now glanced at the middle of another—I seemed to want to gulp down the news all at once! I don't remember how the morning passed. Somehow I automatically got through the morning routine. I tried to shave with tooth powder, then sat in an empty bath and forgot to turn on the tap. Did I have breakfast that day? I don't remember.

"What joy, what joy! Is it really impossible for me to go to Russia? At once? I dashed off to the Russian Consulate to apply for a passport, but bored officials informed me that they had received no instructions, and that I must apply to the Home Office, etc. etc.

"What am I to do? Apply by telephone to the Provisional Government for permission to leave? But they have more important things to deal with than my return to Russia. I remembered how in 1905 I felt sorry for my comrades in exile when they could not be with me to watch the joyous spectacle of revolutionary events. Now I am in the same predicament. Incredible happiness and incredible pain. What a tragedy—to spend half one's life in..."

At this point the notes break off.

After the February Revolution, a Delegates' Committee was set up in London to assist in the return of emigrés to Russia. Chicherin became its secretary.

The fall of the autocracy had opened the way home for the emigrés. London at once became the centre of attraction for the countless Russian colonies scattered all over Europe. It was difficult to get through to Russia via Germany. There was one practical route—from the British Isles across Scandinavia to Arkhangelsk or Petrograd.

In March, London had already become a place of pilgrimage for Russian emigrés from France, Switzerland, and other countries. The Delegates' Committee took on the work of looking after the new arrivals and their subsequent departure for Russia. The committee's premises were on Charlotte Street in two small rooms. In the first sat Chicherin, and in the second, Angela Nagel, daughter of People's Will member Ludwig Nagel, and Sokolova, a Social-Democrat. When the World War broke out, Ludwig Nagel, being of German

origin, was sent to the sparsely populated Isle-of-Man. Angela had a job in a factory and was closely connected with the Russian colony. She was appointed Chicherin's secretary.

The Russian emigrés made their way to London by circuitous routes as best they could. Many arrived with families and small children. Their passports were improvised or home-made, and they often arrived without a penny in their pockets. They all had to be accommodated, fed, and sent on to Russia.

The main problem, finances, was solved quite simply. Chicherin and Litvinov went to the representative of the Provisional Government, Nabokov, and insisted that he should put the resources of the embassy at the disposal of the Delegates' Committee. Nabokov refused at first, but then gave in.

But there were other problems. It was not easy to find accommodation in London, which was packed with refugees. The Delegates' Committee made arrangements with the cheapest hotels in various parts of the British capital.

There was tremendous activity in the two committee rooms. Russians arrived every morning by steamship and train. Antonov-Ovseyenko<sup>39</sup> and Taratuta<sup>40</sup> arrived from Paris, and also other revolutionaries. There was no limit to their joy. Friends who had lost one another met after many years, and there were tears in their eyes. Angela held the lists in her hands and called out the names of those who were leaving. There and then, Chicherin and Litvinov seated at a small table, paid out subsistence, hotel, and travel allowances. The sum issued to the head of the family and his dependents, was entered into the passport which was signed by Chicherin.

The route home was a complicated one. Communications with Russia were maintained only by sea. The emigrés were sent by train to Aberdeen on the west coast. Groups of 30 to 40 left London for Aberdeen every day. Chicherin came to the railway station to see them off. He came in his old overcoat with a velvet collar and the usual little attaché case in one hand. The only steamer, the *Vulture*, sailed almost regularly to the Norwegian port of Bergen. The war was still raging and the ship was escorted by two destroyers. They sailed on either side, protecting it from German U-boats.

The first steamer carrying emigrés hit a German mine and sank; all on board perished. Fortunately, subsequent sailings to Norway went off safely. The emigrés left Norway for their homeland by Russian or Norwegian steamers. Most of them had spent decades abroad after escaping from the dungeons of Akatui and Nerchinsk, or from less known penal colonies. They were returning home white-haired after many hardships and experiences. With them travelled the



younger generation, who had never seen Russia at all.

It was learned that Lenin and a group of Bolsheviks had left for Petrograd. The London colony had also thinned out considerably. Litvinov was eager to go to Russia. He had told his wife a long time before that if the drums of the revolution called him, he would immediately drop everything and hurry back. But his son was only a few weeks old and there was a flu epidemic in London. He had to wait. He was dismayed because his heart was in Russia. And finally, after hard weeks of uncertainty and confusion, when only vague information was arriving from Russia, came news of Lenin's return to Petrograd and his speech at Finland Station.

Lenin's April Theses gave an extremely clear picture of the situation: the bourgeois-democratic revolution must develop into a proletarian, socialist revolution. One of the main slogans was make war against war.

For Litvinov, Lenin's April Theses were not simply a political programme, they were practical instructions for action. He began writing his first piece on the nature of the Russian revolution without yet knowing what he was going to call it; but it would contain an analysis of the 1905 revolution and the February revolution, while the further content would be prompted by the events. History itself would write the final chapters! And he would publish the book in London.

In the turmoil of those days when, it seemed, not a free moment was left, Litvinov negotiated with the future publishers, the Labourites. Yes, they were ready to publish his book, but it depended on the contents. He contacted E. C. Fairchild, a Labour MP, who agreed to write a foreword. But how inadequate and distorted was the news coming from Petrograd! The London Bolsheviks were virtually deprived of real information about what was happening in their homeland.

Meanwhile, Litvinov learned that the cruiser *Varyag* had arrived in Liverpool for repairs, that same legendary *Varyag*.

This cruiser, scuttled by Russian sailors in 1904, had been raised by the Japanese in 1905 and four years later had been taken into the Japanese Navy under the name *Soya*. At the height of the First World War, the tsarist government bought the *Varyag* from Japan along with two other warships, the *Cbesna* and *Peresvet*. Sailing by southern sea routes, they set out from Vladivostok to Murmansk, but the *Peresvet* never made it, hitting a German mine and blowing up not far from Port Said. In November 1916, the *Cbesna* and *Varyag* arrived at Murmansk, where the *Cbesna* joined the line.

When he heard about the arrival of the *Varyag*, Litvinov rushed to Liverpool. No one knows how he managed to get on board the war-

ship. But he spent twenty-four hours there, talked to the officers and men, and made a speech to the crew. The senior officer glumly announced to the crew that they were going to be addressed by Maxim Litvinov, a representative of the Russian colony in London. The men assembled on deck. It was the first time they were listening to a Bolshevik. He told them that a new life was dawning over Russia. The Revolution was just beginning.

On August 7, agents of the secret service arrested Chicherin and sent him to Brixton Prison. There had been nothing to indicate this turn of events. The cause was a conversation that Chicherin had had a short time previously with Nabokov. Chicherin was forced to visit the former tsarist embassy, where he discussed with Nabokov the various problems associated with sending emigrés home. During one such meeting, the conversation became political, and Chicherin spoke harshly about Kerensky, Head of the Provisional Government. Chicherin was particularly outraged by the policy of continuing the slaughter of Russian soldiers. Kerensky was in no way better than Nicholas, said Chicherin. The infuriated Nabokov reported this conversation to the British authorities, and they availed themselves of this convenient opportunity to add other groundless charges.

Chicherin's arrest took place under the following circumstances. In the afternoon, as usual, he was in his room in Charlotte Street on the premises of the Delegates' Committee. Angela was drawing up the latest list of departing emigrés. A man walked quickly across Angela's small room. Without greeting her, he burst into Chicherin's office. He was English in appearance, a total stranger, since Angela knew all the visitors, including the English.

The unexpected visitor soon left. An agitated Chicherin emerged after him. He paced up and down the room for a long time, waving his arms agitatedly as if arguing with himself, then asked Angela:

"D'you know who that was?"

"I can guess," Angela replied.

"A Secret Service agent. I've been arrested."

This happened on a Saturday. The Secret Service, aware that Chicherin could not leave Britain, behaved in a most "gentlemanly" fashion. They didn't want to "spoil" his week-end, and gave him three days to wind up his affairs. He was to report to the prison on Tuesday. Chicherin summoned the members of the Delegates' Committee and excitedly gave them all the details. On Tuesday Chicherin reported in person to the police station, where he was awaited by a "gentleman" who escorted him to Brixton Prison.

Chicherin was permitted to send letters from prison once a month.

He did this on a piece of exercise-book paper. In his minute, neat handwriting, he wrote down a mass of specific instructions and errands, asked many questions to which he demanded an answer, and forgot nothing. In one such letter, he instructed Angela to remit a sum of money to Russia for his old nurse.

Litvinov spent days in the Labour Party office with the MPs, trying to get Chicherin released from prison.

At the end of the summer, the Russian army mounted a successful offensive in the south-west. The British government was still eager to secure final victory over Germany at the cost of Russian blood. The London papers extolled the "gallant allies" in Russia, and hushed up the July events and the shooting of demonstrators in Petrograd, and praised Kerensky to the skies.

But where was Lenin? Where were the other Bolshevik leaders? The most contradictory news about them was reaching London; confused and garbled messages about the July days made the search for the truth even more difficult. Litvinov could see which way things were heading. He had a superb grasp of the situation and wrote down in the theses for his book: "Kerensky is preparing a new Bonaparte—General Kornilov." He closely followed the treacherous line of the Mensheviks, especially Tsereteli and Chkheidze, for those two he knew particularly well. He gave a merited appraisal to the connivers who were handing over power in Russia to the new Cavaignacs, as he described the Menshevik leaders in his book.

It was from special editions of the London newspapers that Litvinov learned about the historic events in Petrograd on October 25 (November 7). He began his book about the Great October Socialist Revolution on the same day, as soon as the storming of the Winter Palace became news and the entire bourgeois press flooded the world with reports of "chaos" in Petrograd and all over Russia, predicting the inevitable and swift collapse of the Revolution. He wrote it in bursts during two exciting months—November and December 1917.

On the morning of January 3, 1918, Petrograd radio stations broadcast an announcement from the Soviet Government that Litvinov had been appointed Ambassador of the Russian Soviet Republic to Great Britain. This announcement was published that day in the London evening papers. In his Hampstead flat, Litvinov wrote his first diplomatic note, in which he made known the decision of the Council of People's Commissars about his appointment and handed it to Sir James Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary.

His life as a political emigré was over. Behind him lay twenty years devoted to the Revolution. And what years! He had been through the

prisons of Russia, France, and Germany. He had been in the very epicentre of events, at the heart of the Party's activities, in the furnace where victory was being forged. An agent of *Iskra*, a member of the Kiev, Riga, and North-West Committees of the RSDLP, a member with Lenin of the Bureau of the Majority Committee, a member of the administration of the Foreign League of Russian Revolutionary Social-Democracy, a leader of the transport organisation of the Bolsheviks, gun-runner assisting preparations for an armed uprising in Russia, one of the creators of the first legal Bolshevik newspaper, *Novaya Zhizn*, a representative of the CC of the RSDLP in the International Socialist Bureau, delegate of the Third and guest of the Fifth Party Congresses, secretary of the Bolshevik colony in London—these are far from all the duties fulfilled by Maxim Litvinov from 1898 to 1917.

There would be no more secret police who had referred to him in its coded messages by one or another of his Party names, and invariably added "alias Litvinov". There was only Maxim Maximovich Litvinov, representative of the People's Government of Soviet Russia in London.



## PART TWO

### The Diplomat

#### PEOPLE'S AMBASSADOR

When the Labour Party was founded in 1900, it was a small, obscure group of idealists. It was not until 1917, when it became the official opposition, that it began to attract the attention of the public. It was then that it became known as the 'People's Ambassador'.

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*Chapter 1*

**PEOPLE'S AMBASSADOR**

Litvinov looked at the surrounding world with new eyes. London was the same old London that had given him shelter after his expulsion from France—a huge city, foggy, its skies smoke-laden, its streets familiar. In the previous nine years, Litvinov had walked them a thousand times.

London was the same, but Litvinov's position had changed. No longer could he drop in at a pub that struck his fancy. No longer could he take pictures of the homeless under the bridge. He represented a huge country—not simply Russia, but Soviet Russia.

Britain did not wish to recognise Bolshevik Russia: Foreign Secretary Balfour would not see Litvinov. But he could not altogether reject the note of a plenipotentiary envoy of a world power, and therefore received it through a junior Foreign Office official. Litvinov was informed that Balfour would maintain contact with him through a Rex Leeper, a young diplomat. That was the opening act in Litvinov's diplomatic career.

Towards the close of 1917, Litvinov occupied himself to get Chicherin out of Brixton Prison. He approached the Labourites who had sympathy for Soviet Russia and for Chicherin himself. Questions about the prisoner were asked in Parliament. The public clamoured for his release. Indeed, there had been no legal grounds for arresting him. The Soviet government announced that no British subject, not even Ambassador Sir George William Buchanan, would be allowed to leave Russia until Chicherin was released.

Litvinov called at the Foreign Office to let Balfour know Moscow was detaining Buchanan.

Downing Street wanted information about the situation in Soviet Russia. It wanted this information from Buchanan. Besides, it wanted to replace the elderly diplomat with a younger man, Bruce Lockhart, who had been acting consul-general in Moscow. He had returned from Petrograd shortly before the October Revolution.

Litvinov's appointment was therefore welcome. The Foreign



Office instructed Lockhart to contact the Russian. They met in a little restaurant in the Strand, and came to terms that both of them—Litvinov in London, and Lockhart in Moscow—would enjoy certain diplomatic privileges. Litvinov wrote a letter to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs in Moscow; it would be the British diplomat's permit for entering Russia.

This worked in Chicherin's favour. At the beginning of January 1918 he was released, and left for Russia at once. Maxim Litvinov saw him off at the railway station.

In Litvinov's personal file, which has miraculously survived (in which he collected notes, newspaper clippings, and other documents related to his early diplomatic activity), I found a *Daily Chronicle* interview. Litvinov had not yet rented a place for the embassy, and therefore received the *Daily Chronicle* man at his home. The public wished to know about Litvinov, and the correspondent described the Soviet envoy at some length.

The interview follows:

"The representative of one of the greatest nations in the world and in world history, dwells in one of those small, decent, characterless houses which, arranged in monotonous rows in monotonous regularity, form the monotonous settlements on the fringe of the great city known as Suburbia. A narrow lobby led into Ambassador's den, a small room equipped with a few bookshelves, a writing-desk, and a typewriter.

"A short interval of waiting permitted a cursory glance at the bookshelf nearest the desk. Someone has said that a man's books are an index of the man. If that is so, a couple of novels of W.W. Jacobs' must be interpreted as best one can. At least they showed a good grip of the English language, and particularly of English character and humour. A more pointed significance belonged perhaps to a history of the *Commune of 1871*, which had clearly just been laid down by the reader. Russian books and an old edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* filled most of the shelf space.

"A short, thickset, bulky figure entered the room. It was the Ambassador. Democratic cordiality was shown in the firm handshake; keen intelligence shone in the grey eyes, their glance intensified by pince-nez, and force of will, if not pugnacity, in the firm, clean-shaven chin and thick neck. He lit a Russian cigarette, drew himself up before a small coalfire, and began to speak, slowly and deliberately, gazing all the time, not at his interlocutor, but at the dancing flames.

" 'My task as Ambassador,' he began, 'will be to disseminate the truth about Russia. I shall have to dissipate the web of misunder-

ing and misinterpretation—more particularly, of course, the misinterpretation of the motives, character and purpose of the Soviet Government.'

"Nine years in England have given him a perfect mastery of our tongue. The occasional practice of journalism, of which the typewriter at his elbow was evidence, has given him the literary habit of speech, and a facility in the choice of the exact word. He spoke as if dictating an article, and, indeed, admitted afterwards that his mind had been working on that presumption all the time he had been talking. Articles from his pen have appeared in English papers of the highest influence, and it is not unnatural that as an old friend and associate of Lenin he should have been sought after of late by editors. As an Ambassador, however, his article-writing days were ended.

" 'In the first place,' he continued, 'the party at present in power in Russia is being misrepresented as guilty of a usurpation of authority and worse. People are apt to believe that the Bolsheviks grabbed power for themselves or for party purposes, whereas the contrary is the case. Their motto, 'All power for the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates', was launched in the very first days of the February Revolution when the Bolsheviks formed only a small minority of the Soviets...

" 'The second Revolution in November was executed with a view of taking the reins out of the trembling hands of Kerensky and his associates and handing them over to the Soviets...

" 'This is the crucial fact of present Russia—that the class war in its naked form is raging not only in Great Russia but also in Ukraina and ... Siberia...

" 'The explanation is that the parties in power in those provinces belong to the same type as the Kerenskys and Tereshchenkos...

" 'But does all this not show that the Bolshevik Government has, to say the least, a disputed authority?'

" 'Of course, it is disputed. But I must point out that it has behind it nearly the whole of the industrial working class and the great mass of the peasants whether in uniform or mufti.'

" 'But what of Bolshevism and the war?'

" 'It is grossly mischievous to represent the Bolsheviks as pro-German or anti-Ally, or—(after a pause)—mere pacifists. They are none of these things. They realise as clearly as anyone that Kaiserism and Junkerdom are the greatest obstacles across the path of the international proletariat towards self-emancipation. But they have discovered that Prussia is not the only soil that is congenial to the growth of these noxious plants. They are opposed to the mere replacing of Prussian militarism by Russian, French or English militarism.

"The triumph of militarism as such would be the inevitable outcome of victory by force of arms for either belligerent group. Were the Bolsheviks in a position to fight German militarism for the sake of their own principles and for their own revolutionary aims, without helping at the same time the militarists and imperialists of other lands, they would be eager to do so."

"The Ambassador rose to his feet. His voice rang with the conviction that comes of a faith held with the intensity of a religion. 'I am sanguine enough,' he declared, 'to imagine that the Russian and German armies on the Eastern front may some day march together against the common foes of the world's proletariat in Germany itself and—perhaps in other countries too! I do believe, in fact, that by the negotiations now going on and the multifarious propaganda that is being urged among the German soldiers in the East,' he said, 'Lenin was contributing towards the downfall of Kaiserism more effectually than the Allies by their fighting in the West.'

"There came a warning note into the voice.

"A separate peace would be looked upon by the Bolsheviks as a disaster and as the collapse of their efforts. But the present condition of Russia, aggravated as it is by civil war, may make it inevitable. It is for the democracies of the Allied countries to see that this calamity does not happen. They have a responsibility, too—one from which history will not acquit them—and it is high time for them to raise their voices and use all the means at their command to compel their governments to facilitate the path towards a democratic peace. This, if it is to be done, must be done at once. Otherwise it will be too late! Russia has spoken. *La parole est aux ouvriers des pays alliés.*"

That was the Soviet envoy's first interview in London. It aroused a lively response. Respectable bourgeois papers attacked Litvinov for his call for peace. But all of them noticed his reasoned and moderate exposition of the Bolshevik view of international affairs.

So much for the political creed. Now, steps had to be taken to establish relations with Britain. This was what Soviet Russia expected from Litvinov.

In 1933, sixteen years after he was appointed envoy to Britain by a cable from Petrograd, Litvinov came to London again to attend the World Economic Conference. He had long since been made People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. At the railway station, he was met by the Foreign Secretary and members of the diplomatic corps. All the honours due to the minister of a great power were accorded.

In London, whenever he had some free time, Litvinov saw Ivan Maisky, the Soviet envoy in Britain. They frequented various London parks. During one such walk, Litvinov, not usually inclined

to speak of the past, told Maisky of the first steps of his diplomatic career. Maisky took down Litvinov's story, and asked him to check his notes. Litvinov made a few corrections, and kept a copy for himself.

"And so," Litvinov's story began, "I became envoy. But I had nothing—neither directives from Moscow, nor money, nor anybody to help me. Needless to say, I had no diplomatic training and no experience.

"To begin with, contact had to be made with Moscow. I took advantage of one of the comrades leaving for Soviet Russia. He took a letter along to the newly established People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, asking for instructions and money. I also sent a code devised with the help of one of the people of the former tsarist military mission in London who was a sympathiser. Until then, the Foreign Commissariat had no code for me, and our contacts were by clear cablegrams. The code I sent, by the way, was touched up in Moscow and sent for use to all our envoys. When coded correspondence thus became possible between the Foreign Commissariat and me, our contacts became closer.

"After repeated requests on my part, I was at last informed, in March 1918, that the Commissariat was despatching its first messenger with a diplomatic pouch. You can well imagine how impatiently I waited for him. I followed the various stages of his long journey. He travelled across Finland, Sweden, and Norway, and I went to the railway station to meet him in person. But, alas, the pouch he brought did not contain what I had expected. In one way, however, it did resolve my difficulties: I received nearly 200,000 roubles in tsarist banknotes, which were then still being accepted in Britain. Now, at least, I could begin organising the first Soviet mission in London. I leased a place at 82 Victoria Street, ordered letterheads and rubber stamps, and employed a few people to help me. The mission's secretary was my wife, who took care of all the English correspondence. In addition, I picked three or four emigrés and former members of the tsarist military mission to help out.

"On the door I hung a sign, Russian People's Embassy. The consulate was under the same roof, and was called Russian People's Consulate. I called myself Russian People's Ambassador. I invented these names because, as I said, I had received no instructions from Moscow, and none as to my own official title."

There was a visiting card in Litvinov's file, stating who he was and the reception hours at 82 Victoria Street. The embassy was open to visitors from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. but only half-day on Saturdays.



Before continuing Litvinov's story, let me take you back to his house and see what was going on there two weeks after his appointment. The account was by Marion Ryan of the *Weekly Dispatch*, headed, "The Litvinoffs At Home". Here it is:

"Some men have greatness thrust upon them. Such a man is Maxim Litvinoff, the present 'Representative of the Russian People' in London.

"Two years ago he married a young English girl, Ivy Lowe, a novelist of promise, a member of a well-known literary family, and just the woman to share his hopes and dreams.

"The Litvinoffs lived the most secluded and quiet of lives in a tiny house in West Hampstead. The postman came often, but there were few callers, and those who came were Russians. There was no tinkle of a telephone bell, no puffing of taxicabs. Their house was as somnolent as all the houses in that road.

"But M. and Mme. Litvinoff were not somnolent. Great things were happening in Russia, and M. Litvinoff's dreams seemed near fulfilment. Exiles made their way home again, but he stayed in London. He knew Lenin intimately, and had written of him as a man of ability and action.

"And then, quite suddenly, this pleasant, quiet gentleman, who looks like an English statesman and was regarded in Hillfield Road as a quiet scholar devoted to his young wife and their beautiful baby, was thrust into the post of Representative of the Russian People and unofficially recognised Ambassador with a distinctly unofficial embassy. He was chosen by the Bolsheviks because of his beliefs, because of his long residence in England and his excellent knowledge of languages.

"Since then life has completely changed in the Litvinoff household, and all Hillfield Road is affected by the change. There are taxicabs and callers and Pressmen and messenger-boys all day and the neighbours are agog with excitement. Greatness has been thrust upon them also, and if you ring the Litvinoffs' bell and nobody answers, some friendly neighbour can tell you just when they went out and when they are likely to return.

"Somebody answered the bell when I found their little house after tramping through slush-lined streets, with wind and rain trying to see which could be more disagreeable. Mme. Litvinoff was home and received me in the little room which is office, sitting-room, and the playroom of Mischa Litvinoff aged one year.

Mme. Litvinoff is tall and slender, with mobile features, dark eyes, and hair bobbed in the fashion which Chelsea borrowed from Russia some years ago.

" 'We do not wish to be written up,' she said plaintively. 'And I absolutely will not discuss political questions or our plans with you, but I'll give you some tea and show you my son instead.'

" 'The word embassy suggests marble staircases and wide halls and drawing-rooms fragrant with costly flowers,' she added as she knelt down to toast a piece of bread, 'so you need not go away and call this the Embassy, unofficial or otherwise, and you need not speak of me as the unofficial Ambassadress, for I am not in the least like one, even an unofficial one. My husband is the Russian People's Representative. That's quite enough.

" 'We are going to try to take a house with a little more room and a telephone, as that is necessary. In fact I never dreamed how necessary a telephone was till two weeks ago.

" 'I cannot even say much about my husband because he would not like it. He simply wants to do his work and be undisturbed in that, but he cannot. This used to be a refuge for him, this little room, but it is not any more, for though he has an office in the City, people will come out here, and even my best efforts as a policewoman and guardian of the peace are not always effectual.

" 'I am not really his secretary, though I do help him with his correspondence. He speaks and writes English splendidly, but he has so much to do, he cannot get through it all.

" 'I did not take much interest in politics before I was married. I was socialistically inclined, but I am afraid I did not have any very definite views.

" 'Russian husbands share their lives and views more with their wives than English husbands do, however, and so I have learned much and am interested in all my husband does.

" 'Russian women are so well educated and so intelligent, you see, and a Russian husband can do with less domesticity and more intelligence. That is why so many Russian women have professions as well as being wives and mothers. Their husband's ideal is to have a wife who is a companion and someone to come in and do the house-keeping.

" 'My husband's friends here were chiefly Russian refugees like himself; many of them have gone back to their own country now; but I knew some of them well, and I only wish people here knew Russians as well. They were interesting, even brilliant men and women, those refugees, living in poverty, having a struggle to earn a livelihood, but never complaining and always dreaming and hoping their sacrifices would avail in the end.

" 'We are very ignorant about Russia, most of us here. Why, even Englishmen and Englishwomen who consider themselves well read

will tell you they know nothing of Russian literature, one of the greatest, if not the greatest, literatures in the world. And how can you know the people if you know nothing of their literature?’

“Then Mischa from his high chair gurgled unintelligibly and Mme. Litvinoff gave him a crust and a Russian endearment.

“‘I only know a little Russian,’ she said in answer to my question. ‘I began to study it with my husband, but now we have had to give up the lessons. Of course we want and intend to go to Russia some day, and I would like to have at least a working knowledge of the language.’

“At this point the bell rang again, and Mme. Litvinoff had to sympathise with two Russian women who had come all the way from Hammersmith to see the People’s Representative. She was kind and helpful, and gave them the City address and telephone number, and they went away, through the slush, soothed but voluble.

“The last I saw of Citizeness Litvinoff she was standing with her baby in her arms looking very young, but happy and interested. Her day’s work was not half done, for she had still to put her energetic little son to bed, then get supper for the People’s Representative and herself, and talk over with him the news matter in the six papers they read daily, and finally to help him with the correspondence.”

Now back to Litvinov’s own tale:

“What were my relations with the British government and the public? The time before and after the signing of the Brest Treaty differed sharply in that respect. Before the treaty, the attitude of both official and unofficial Britain was, considering the time and the circumstances, relatively good... The Foreign Office kept contact with me through Rex Leeper. He had known me before. Now, my old acquaintanceship was used for diplomatic purposes. Initially, my meetings with Leeper had an air of romanticism: we used to meet in a cafe or restaurant, or in one of the London parks.

“It stands to reason that having obtained Balfour’s de facto recognition, I tried to close down the old tsarist embassy. I wrote a letter to Konstantin Nabokov, who was then chargé d’affaires, and told him to stop play-acting and hand over Chesham House (the embassy premises). I sent the letter with one of my employees. Nabokov received him and said politely that if the Soviet government had been officially recognised by the British government, he would not have hesitated to retire and to let me have the embassy building. Since this was not the case, he considered my claim groundless. I sent a similar letter to the tsarist consul-general, Mr. Onu. The consul was a far cruder man than Nabokov, and told my man to get out. But I was successful in another

way: I sent the Bank of England a letter demanding that it arrest all money belonging to the tsarist government and military mission. The bank complied, and the tsarist embassy and mission stopped receiving money.

“As for my relations with the press and public, I had no grounds for complaint during the first period (before the signing of the Brest Treaty). I was continuously interviewed and photographed, my wife’s relatives were described in detail, and we were not too harshly judged.”

The Litvinovs were even invited to receptions. Though Soviet Russia was not yet recognised, its powerful influence reached stand-offish London. Ivy Litvinova recollected:

“Appearances had to be kept up, and since ‘Mrs. Litvinoff’ existed, she was also invited to dinners and lunches in Westminster, in fashionable Mayfair, and once even Downing Street. I was seated alongside Ramsay MacDonald and opposite Bertrand Russell. Leaning across the table, I asked him what he thought of Freud. For an instant, the philosopher fixed his eagle eyes on me. But he did not reply. Still, everyone was very kind. The lady on my right started a conversation with me. ‘I think you must have been very surprised,’ she said to me gently, ‘when from your quiet life with husband and baby in West Hampstead you were dragged into the whirlpool of world events. All of us see you sitting down at breakfast one morning, and being told by your husband, ‘Congratulations, dear, you are now the wife of an ambassador.’

“I told the lady that we had not learned the news from a newspaper.”

Speaking to a *Daily Chronicle* correspondent, Litvinov said his main task was to dispel the lies about Soviet Russia. For this, he used every possible opportunity: press interviews, speeches at meetings, articles about the October Revolution in the *Labour Leader* and other journals and newspapers, and leaflets and pamphlets. He also took a firm stand against continuing the war.

The pamphlet Litvinov began writing in 1917 was completed by early 1918. He called it *The Bolshevik Revolution: Its Rise and Meaning*. The chapter titles—it contained six chapters in addition to a foreword by E.C. Fairchild and a preface by the author—show how much ground Litvinov covered in it: 1. The First Revolution (1905); 2. The War; 3. The Revolution of March 1917; 4. Anti-Bolshevism in Ascendancy; 5. The Bolshevik Revolution; 6. The Bolshevik Programme of Peace.

Litvinov examined the three Russian revolutions, exposed the counter-revolutionary forces, demonstrated the extraordinary part



Lenin had played in the workers' struggle for liberation, and showed the international nature of the October Revolution.

In his foreword, the then popular Labour leader E.C. Fairchild called on Britain's working class to try and understand the substance of what had occurred in Russia in October 1917.

The pamphlet was printed at the Labour Party's printshop. Its first edition apparently appeared in February 1918. Two months later a second edition was put out. Litvinov's pamphlet was thus the first one by a Bolshevik Marxist published abroad, in the citadel of the capitalist world, after the Great October Socialist Revolution. It did a lot to elucidate the truth about the October Revolution, and influenced the appearance in Britain of Hands off Russia Committees.<sup>41</sup>

One late August night in 1918, a messenger with a special assignment from Moscow, from Lenin in person, came to Litvinov's London home. An important event had occurred in the Soviet capital on July 19. The first Constitution of the Russian Federation had been adopted and published by the Fifth All-Russia Congress of Soviets. And Lenin asked Bonch-Bruyevich, who was in charge of the Kremlin chancellery, to send its text to Litvinov in London as quickly as possible. Perhaps the latter would let the British workers know about it.

Litvinov read and reread the text, and wondered how and where he could publish it. He did publish it in the end, though the pamphlet was destroyed. Still extant, however, is a copy of Litvinov's foreword in English. It shows the sort of language Litvinov used when addressing the working people, and what thoughts he sought to convey to them as the plenipotentiary of his country.

"In revolutionary situations, especially situations so fraught with social reconstruction as at present in Russia," he wrote, "the supreme interests of the Revolution and of the revolutionary classes are also supreme justice. The world has seen many constitutions, but none like the one the text of which is published in the following pages. It is the first constitution of the first Socialist State in the history of the world. What was the dream of generations of Socialists did by the strange will of Fate become an accomplished fact in Russia in November 1917; and the Socialist International—or whatever has remained of it in these days of wholesale desertion from, and profound demoralisation in the ranks of Socialism—can see now how the working class, come to power, has attempted to construct a State machinery on the morrow of the Socialist Revolution. For this constitution is no product of the individual brain of a learned theorist or even practical statesman, but, in the full sense of the word, an organic

growth, a spontaneous creation of the Revolution, the will of the collective constructive genius of the Russian toiling masses."

Then, referring to the role of the Soviets of Deputies in the three Russian revolutions, Litvinov added: "It never entered the head of anyone but Lenin that this purely revolutionary business organisation of a seemingly temporary character was destined to become the corner-stone of the future organisation of the Russian Socialist Commonwealth. But such was its destiny, as foreseen by Lenin as early as the beginning of April. The present constitution, therefore, though a written one, is not a paper, but a LIVE constitution, pulsating with the blood, the ideas, the sentiments, and let us also say, passions of the toiling revolutionary masses of Russia."

The British thus received new important evidence about the October Revolution, and about the victories and objectives of the Russian working class.

Litvinov had already leased the premises for the embassy and began what Chicherin described as establishing ties with Britain's industrial and commercial world. He contacted British industrialists and businessmen in London and other cities. On his instructions, the Soviet consul he had appointed in Glasgow, a Scotsman named MacLean, did the same in Scotland. Slowly but surely, his efforts yielded fruit. Soon, Britain's industrial world came out publicly for trade with Soviet Russia, and then for Soviet Russia's recognition.

Certainly, Litvinov devoted all his energy to political affairs, especially in the exceedingly difficult period when the Entente countries launched their armed intervention against the Soviet Republic. Let us go back to Litvinov's remembrances:

"I spoke at the 17th Conference of the Labour Party in Nottingham. Time and again, I had to cross swords with opponents of the October Revolution at big meetings. I especially remember a meeting in Caxton Hall. Here is its story. In the summer of 1918, Kerensky came to London and delivered a vile speech against the Bolsheviks at the Labour conference chaired by Arthur Henderson. I was present, but was refused the floor to reply to Kerensky despite loud calls from the audience. A few days later, the left-wing Labourites, jointly with a few radical MPs (Joseph King, and others), convened a special meeting at Caxton Hall, with me as the main speaker. The place was filled to overcrowding. There was excitement in the air and the resolutions we adopted were sharply worded."

Litvinov's efforts in London were anxiously followed in Moscow. In December 1919, Chicherin spoke at the Seventh All-Russia Congress of Soviets:

"In June 1918, at a London workers' conference, Kerensky was met with expressions of hostility, while Litvinov was cheered, though he was not allowed to speak... At large meetings in London ... marked by general enthusiasm, people adopted resolutions demanding 'Hands off Russia'."

One of the leaflets distributed at that time in Britain said: "The news recently to hand that British troops have landed at Revel and are marching on Petrograd, renders it necessary that the workers of Britain shall consider what steps must be taken to compel the Allied Governments to withdraw all troops from Russian territory... No excuse whatever for the continuance of the war against the first Socialist Republic."

The London meeting, which adopted the text of this leaflet, appealed to Britain's workers to act against the imperialist intervention in Soviet Russia.

But the main difficulties would still come. Britain launched an open intervention, which immediately affected Litvinov's position. Here is how he related it:

"One morning, when I came to the mission, I found it locked. It turned out that the owner of the house at 82 Victoria Street had decided that a dangerous institution like the Soviet Mission was better closed. He tore up our contract, and hung a lock on the door. I went to court. The court found that the owner of the house was, indeed, guilty of breach of contract. The owner argued that I, Litvinov, engaged in dangerous 'propaganda' against King and country. Thereupon, the court took the houseowner's side. It ruled that, though he had unilaterally breached the contract, my application should be turned down. It was useless to appeal to any higher instance. As a result, the Russian People's Embassy at 82 Victoria Street ceased to exist. I removed it to my own flat at 11 Bigwood Avenue, Golder's Green, C 3."

The situation reflected on the family's welfare. The Litvinovs had had a second baby, a daughter whom they called Tatiana. Ivy Litvinova recollected:

"About a fortnight after my return from the maternity hospital, the girl Charlotte, our housemaid, stopped coming and I had to run the house by myself with two little children, one of them an infant and the other at an age when you could not leave him alone for a minute. My Aunt Edith hurried to Charlotte's place to find out why she did not come. The flu was at its height then, and we thought that perhaps the girl had caught it. But Charlotte was all right. She opened the door and let Aunt Edith in. No, no, she said, she can no longer go to Mrs. Litvinoff. She did not want people to see her entering and

leaving a house that was watched by the police. For a number of days, as she noticed, detectives had been watching the place from across the road, and followed Mr. Litvinoff whenever he left the house. She had no idea what he had done, a quiet and polite gentleman that he was, but whatever the case, she wanted nothing to do with the police."

On August 30, 1918, an attempt was made on Lenin's life in Moscow. The reactionaries in Britain were jubilant. They waited for the collapse of the Revolution. They gloated for all they were worth. And Litvinov's situation became still more complicated. The government no longer wanted a semi-official Soviet representative in Britain. Charlotte was right. Litvinov had long since been under secret surveillance. Soon, indeed, all pretences were dropped. After the arrest of Bruce Lockhart for counter-revolutionary activity in Moscow on September 1, the London papers reported that "a Scotland Yard representative has been 'attached' to the 'Embassy' and Mr. Litvinoff's movements are being closely watched. Mr. Litvinoff stated that he had no news direct as to the arrest of Lockhart, that he was naturally much hindered in his work by the surveillance of the police authorities."

On September 6, Litvinov was arrested. "The British government," he recollected, "searched my house and arrested me in reprisal. Almost all the other employees of the Mission were also searched and arrested. I was taken to Brixton Prison."

But an ambassador is an ambassador, even though not formally recognised. On the door of Litvinov's cell, a sign was attached, saying, "Detained at His Majesty's Pleasure".

Litvinov paced up and down the cell and wondered what he could do to regain his freedom. Ill tidings reached him. The newspapers urged resolute action. There is a clipping in Litvinov's file in which its author suggested telling Lenin that "should the slightest violence be offered Mr. Lockhart, Litvinoff shall be shot". Litvinov underlined this passage in red pencil.

Here is the rest of Litvinov's story:

"A few days after my arrest, Leeper came to see me in my cell. The reason for his visit was obvious. Before my arrest, the Foreign Office was able to contact the Soviet government through me. There was no other way of communicating with Moscow (for Lockhart was in prison). The day I was arrested, this thread between London and Moscow was cut. Yet owing to Lockhart's arrest, London was compelled to start some sort of negotiations with Moscow—if only to secure his release. But how? The Foreign Office sent Leeper to see me. He asked me to dispatch a coded message to Moscow with Britain's proposal for exchanging me for Lockhart. I told Leeper



I would send no messages from a prison cell: either the British government considers me a plenipotentiary of the Soviet government, in which case I should have my freedom, or it considers me a convict, and should not ask me to send any coded messages. It would have to choose. Leeper went away empty-handed.

"Finally, my words took effect. After 10 days in the cell, I returned home; and with me, for I demanded it categorically, all the other people of my mission. True, after my release Scotland Yard agents were attached to me, and followed me day and night. But I was free, and now agreed to forward the Foreign Office proposal to the Soviet government. Moscow accepted it, and the question of my leaving Britain was thus settled.

"But the scheme hit a number of serious snags. Lockhart was in Moscow, I was in London, and communications by rail, telephone, telegraph, etc., between the two capitals were, if not entirely cut, in any case exceedingly complicated. To arrange Lockhart's crossing the Soviet border and me crossing the British on one and the same day and at the same hour, was simply impossible. In the final analysis, the exchange hinged on the question of who should cross the border first. For a long time, we could not come to terms on that. Finally, I made the following proposal to the Foreign Office: I would leave Britain first, but not go to Soviet Russia. Instead, I would stay in Christiania (now Oslo), and await Lockhart's departure from Soviet Russia. Balfour accepted this proposal with a heavy heart.

"This occurred at the end of 1918. All communications between Britain and Soviet Russia proceeded at that time via Scandinavia. They were complicated by the German U-boat war on British shipping and the mines infesting the North Sea. I was to go to Aberdeen and board a ship there which plied to and from Bergen fairly regularly, escorted by two destroyers. From Bergen I would go to Christiania, and from there to Stockholm, whence I would seek access to Soviet Russia.

"A railway strike was on at the time of my departure. The Foreign Office decided to send me and my comrades (about 40 Bolsheviks were going with me) by motor coach. I agreed. Leeper accompanied me to Aberdeen. Besides, the Norwegian Vice-Consul in London took part in arranging my evacuation from Britain. The voyage to Christiania went off safely.

"On arriving in Christiania I went to see the Norwegian Foreign Minister. I told him the details of the case, and said I was entirely at his disposal. The poor man was in difficulties. He said my agreement with the Foreign Office did not concern him, and that I could do whatever I pleased. I therefore called at the British Mission in

Christiania, and told them that I would remain in the Norwegian capital in compliance with my agreement until news of Bruce Lockhart's departure from Soviet Russia should arrive.

"There was a certain delay over Lockhart's release and evacuation, however, and it was not until early October that he finally crossed the Russo-Finnish border. Now I was free to act as I saw fit. That was the end of the story of the first Soviet People's Ambassador in London."

When did the staff of the Soviet Embassy in London finally arrive in Petrograd? Sources differ on this score. In his articles on Soviet Russia's foreign policy in the first two years, which appeared in *Izvestia* on November 6, 7 and 13, 1919, Georgy Chicherin wrote that Litvinov arrived in Petrograd on October 11, 1918. This could not have been Chicherin's mistake. It was probably the mistake of the stenographer who had taken down his article. The mistake was repeated in the collection of Chicherin's articles and speeches. In fact, the Soviet diplomats and the 40 Bolsheviks who left London with Litvinov, arrived in Petrograd a fortnight later. On October 26, *Pravda* carried the following report from Petrograd, entitled "Arrival of Russian Envoys from Britain":

"Members of the Embassy of the Republic of Russia in Britain arrived in Petrograd yesterday and stopped at the guesthouse of the Worker-Peasant Red Army. Comrade Litvinov was held up en route and will arrive a few days later."

Litvinov kept the word he had given the Foreign Office. He stayed in Christiania until he was advised that Lockhart had crossed the Finnish border. Only then did he set out on the second leg of his journey. He arrived in Petrograd on the eve of the first anniversary of the October Revolution.

It was an unusually dry and warm autumn day. For the first time in his life, Litvinov saw Russia without gendarmes. He looked at people, at the houses and streets, and barely recognised the city he had known for so long. For 12 years he had been away, a political emigré. In 1906, he was in St. Petersburg to make the Mensheviks fork out the money to buy arms. He had barely managed to slip past the police to Finland, whereupon he went abroad not to return to Russia again for years. That had been a decision of the RSDLP Central Committee. Now he was home again. Litvinov was expected at the Smolny, seat of the Petrograd government. But he wanted to see the house in Troitsky Street where *Novaya Zhizn*, which he had helped to put out at the time of the first Russian revolution, had had its offices. He also wanted to see the building where the Bolsheviks had had their Central Committee in 1905.

Litvinov knew Petrograd well. But he could not remember how to go to these two places. It occurred to him that he should ask a militiaman. The young lad stood on a street corner with a rifle slung over his shoulder, wearing a red armband. Litvinov approached him, scrutinised his face, and looked into his blue, fearless eyes. He could barely control his excitement, and lost his power of speech. The militiaman's questioning glance gave way to suspicion. He asked:

"What's up, old man?"

He used the Russian word *papasha* which had once been Litvinov's Party name, and Litvinov chuckled. The militiaman's expression grew frigid:

"Who are you?"

Litvinov asked:

"How do I get to the Smolny, the Petrograd City Soviet?"

"You should have asked at once," the militiaman replied.

## Chapter 2

### HERALD OF PEACE

The situation in the country was near disastrous. The Ukraine had been overrun by German troops. Counter-revolutionaries were on the rampage. Hunger was an overriding condition. And Moscow and Petrograd were the hungriest cities in the country. Typhoid was killing people by the thousands. As many as 3,134 cases of cholera were registered in October alone.

On the first anniversary of the Revolution, most people received a holiday allowance of two pounds of potatoes, a quarter pound of vegetable oil, three herrings, and a pound of bread. Professors and members of the Academy of Sciences aged 45 and over had top ration cards. They, too, received the holiday pittance of vegetable oil and their three herrings. Party functionaries and government employees had ration cards of a lower class.

But the new life was asserting itself. Revolutionary changes were spreading. Soviets and their executive bodies were being set up in the remotest towns and villages. Millions upon millions of working people had risen in defence of Lenin's option. Communist Party membership grew by leaps. Young people were setting up the YCL. The poor were organising poor committees. Literacy classes were springing up in workers' quarters and villages.

Hungry, ragged, and unshod, defending itself against the onslaught of counter-revolutionaries and foreign intervention, the country did its utmost to protect the Russian cultural heritage. The house of Maria Savina, the actress, in Petrograd, was declared a national asset. To save objects of art from destruction, museums and picture galleries were allowed special allotments of firewood. Party committees went unheated: the Communists gave up their firewood to orphanages. Clubs were being opened in towns.

At the Sixth All-Russia Extraordinary Congress of Soviets, Lenin delivered a speech on the first anniversary of the October Revolution, and a report on the international situation.

In Germany, a revolution had erupted, too, and Lenin followed developments there very closely. He was also finishing his book, *The*



*Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*, and was exceedingly busy. Yet he carved out time to receive Litvinov.

"Have you found lodgings?" was his first question.

"I've stopped at the Metropole, and will now look around."

"A hotel can't be permanent. You've got to settle down. I've instructed Chicherin. Some pleasant place, possibly at Kuznetsky Most. What about the family?"

"The family is in London. It'll come soon. My wife is most eager to come."

"Your Englishwoman won't find it easy," Lenin observed.

"She'll grow used to it. By the way, Comrade Lenin, she has written you a letter and sent a little gift. I've destroyed the letter for there could be complications en route. And I didn't take the gift for the same reason."

Lenin asked Litvinov to thank his wife. He wanted to know everything about the political mood in Britain, about the state of the British working class, the Labour Party, and the factions in the government. His questions thrust into the very heart of British politics. He also asked Litvinov to tell him about things in Norway. In conclusion, he said:

"My dear Maxim Maximovich, you'll continue as a diplomat. The Foreign Commissariat is in desperate need of people with a Party background."

That was how, in Lenin's study, a new job was given to professional revolutionary Maxim Litvinov. The Party posted him, a man destined to play an outstanding part in the history of Soviet foreign policy, with the diplomatic service. He worked under Lenin's guidance together with such outstanding personalities as Georgy Chicherin, Leonid Krasin, Vaclav Vorovsky, Alexandra Kollontai, Lev Karakhan, Nikolai Krestinsky, Pyotr Voikov, and Boris Stomoniakov. Jointly, they created a fundamentally new diplomatic school.

Litvinov's career as statesman and diplomat lasted nearly 30 years, until the latter half of the 1940s. Those had been hard and heroic times—resisting armed foreign interventionists and home-grown counter-revolutionaries, combating a worldwide blockade, and launching the first five-year plans which turned the backward country into a powerful industrial state. Soviet diplomacy summoned all its skill to maintain the peace as long as possible in those highly complex years that saw the build-up of a military conflagration, and then the brutal war unleashed by Nazi Germany.

After his talk with Lenin, Litvinov was appointed member of the Collegium of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. Soon,

he left for Sweden on an important assignment.

Litvinov's visit to Stockholm had been carefully considered and prepared by Lenin himself. Litvinov was to approach the Western governments with a peace offer. Stockholm had been chosen because the Soviet envoy in Sweden, Vaclav Vorovsky, had fairly good connections in the Swedish industrial and political world. That would help Litvinov's mission, though objectively the situation was exceedingly unfavourable. An anti-Bolshevik hate campaign was gathering momentum all over Europe. The Entente was seeing to it that Soviet relations with Sweden should hang on a thin thread.

Vorovsky's position in Stockholm was, in fact, desperate. In 1918, Russian counter-revolutionaries flooded the Swedish capital. One of their chiefs, a tsarist colonel Hadji-Lush, organised a League of Killers, which he described as a military organisation for the restoration of the Russian Empire. Hadji-Lush's killers did away with Russians in Stockholm who refused to join in their criminal plans or wished to return to Russia. The murders were brutal: people were burnt in boilers or drowned in lakes, or had their arms or legs, and also their heads, chopped off.

Hadji-Lush's cutthroats terrorised the Soviet mission. Its staff was in a constant state of tension. You had to be Vorovsky, to have his willpower, his tenacity, and sense of humour, to endure it. In 1919, on returning to Moscow, Vorovsky wrote a pamphlet, *A World of Loathsome Desolation*, in which he produced a staggering portrayal of the situation in the Swedish capital. His description served as the background for Alexei Tolstoy's novel, *Black Gold (The Emigrés)*.

This was when Litvinov came to Stockholm with Lenin's assignment.

Had he any assistants? He left Moscow with Rosa Zaretskaya, who was to be his secretary and cipher clerk. Had he any sources of information? Mainly the newspapers, and meetings with diplomats, who however, were non-too-eager to see him. On the credit side, too, he had his native insight and his knack of anticipating the adversary's next move.

Before tackling his assignment, Litvinov studied the situation in the country. He spent hours with Vorovsky discussing the state of affairs. The latter introduced him to a few Swedish politicians. Besides, Litvinov's name was known in the Social-Democratic world, for he had been active in the International Socialist Bureau before and during the war. That helped too.

As member of the Foreign Commissariat's Collegium, Litvinov also studied the work of the Soviet Mission. Vorovsky had done a lot to establish and expand ties with various commercial firms. But all sorts

of dubious personalities were snooping about. Among them the tsarist general Ivanov, and the unscrupulous Dmitry Rubinstein, former banker of Alexander Protopopov,<sup>42</sup> a Provisional Government minister, and of Grigory Rasputin. They offered their services as middlemen between the Mission and Sweden's business world, expecting good pickings.

Litvinov helped Vorovsky to get rid of these gentlemen. There were also redundancies at the Mission itself. A Navy representative had been around for some months, doing nothing, and not earning his per diem allowance. During the New Year's celebration at the Mission, Litvinov toasted the "grounded" naval officer, and the latter took the hint, and immediately went home. Other needless people also packed up.

On December 23, 1918, Litvinov approached the ambassadors of Britain, France, Italy, Japan, and the United States with the Soviet government's peace offer. On the following day, he sent a special message to U.S. President Woodrow Wilson, who was then on a visit in London. Endorsed by Lenin, it is vivid evidence of Litvinov's style as diplomat and statesman, and is therefore worth reproducing, at least in part:

"In addition to the general peace proposal recently submitted to the Allies by the Soviet Government, I have today formally informed the Ministers of the United States and the Allies in Stockholm that I have been authorised to enter into negotiations on the peaceful solution of all issues that have caused hostile actions against Russia. The principles you have proclaimed are a possible basis for resolving the European issues, and your public statements about your wish and intention to secure a settlement in pursuance of justice and humanity, have prompted me to send you the present ideas, since most of the points in your peace programme are also points in the more far-reaching and extensive programme of the Russian workers and peasants, who are today rulers of their own country."

A few words are not amiss to explain what Litvinov had in mind: about a year before, the U.S. President had come forward with a peace programme known in history as Wilson's Fourteen Points.

Later, Lenin would pull no punches to expose "peace-maker" Wilson's hypocrisy. But then, three odd years before the Genoa Conference, he saw fit to use Wilson's formally pacifist programme in a bid to end the imperialist war and the intervention in Russia, and to secure true self-determination for the peoples.

Litvinov also wrote in that letter:

"They, the Russian workers and peasants, are the first to have proclaimed and given the nations the right to self-determination, and it was they who made the greatest sacrifice in the fight against imperialism and militarism both at home and abroad, and they, too, who

struck the hardest blow at secret diplomacy and introduced open diplomacy. They have suffered ferocious attacks by the former ruling classes of Russia and their accomplices in other countries, partly because of this new political approach. To justify the attacks, the Soviets have been showered with lies and slanders, and fake documents have been used against them...

"Yet the main objective of the Soviets is to secure economic freedom for the toiling majority of the Russian people, because without it political freedom would have no value. For eight months, the Soviets tried to carry out their aspirations by peaceful means, without resort to force... It was not until their enemies ... committed acts of terrorism against well-known members of the government and asked foreign troops to help them, that the mass of the working people was prompted to acts of despair and gave free vent to its hatred and bitterness...

"The Allied invasion of Russian territory has not only compelled the Soviets, again against their will, to militarise the country and use for the country's defence all their energy and resources, which are so essential for the economic recovery of Russia devastated by four years of defensive warfare, but has also cut them off from vital sources of food and raw materials, consigning the population to terrible privations bordering on hunger...

"The workers and peasants of Russia have decided to defend their dearly-won power and freedom by all the means that enormous country has placed at their disposal. But, conscious of the inevitable and senseless loss of life and property on both sides, wishing to avoid the further ruin of Russia that will follow if the struggle against home and foreign enemies continues, since it concerns the real interests of their country, they are prepared to make all possible concessions, provided this secures conditions for the peaceful implementation of their social programme...

"The dictatorship of the working people and the producers is not an aim in itself, but a means for building a new social system under which all citizens, irrespective of the class to which they previously belonged, will be given equal rights and an opportunity to work usefully. One may believe or disbelieve this ideal, but this does not justify the despatch of foreign troops to fight against it or the arming and support of classes who seek to restore the old system of exploitation of one man by another...

"I hope and believe that before you venture on any action, you will consider the just dictum, *Audiat et altere pars*!"

\* Hear the other side as well (Latin).



The message to Wilson was picked up by the press and gained a public hearing. No matter how much reactionaries in the West perverted the truth about Soviet Russia, it did in the end reach the peoples. Hands Off Russia committees sprang up in many countries.

In the meantime, the Red Army was scoring success after success in the various Civil War theatres. Considerable victories were registered over interventionist and counter-revolutionary troops in early 1919. This compelled the Allies to look for new approaches. In substance, they meant to continue the intervention, the bid to destroy the Soviet system, but at the same time they launched diplomatic manoeuvres. Lenin noticed this immediately. At the end of January 1919, he wrote that the bourgeoisie and the Entente governments had begun to vacillate.

The Allied intentions came to light at the Paris Peace Conference, where the Russian question was discussed. Lloyd George and Woodrow Wilson suggested a special conference on the Kizil Adalar Islands off the Turkish shore.

An attaché of the U.S. Embassy in London arrived in Stockholm on President Wilson's instructions in early January to contact Litvinov and Vorovsky about the proposed negotiations. Litvinov sent Moscow a detailed report on his conversations with the American. He followed the Allies' political manoeuvres in other European capitals with close attention. Their posture, he saw, was still sharply anti-Soviet; he was convinced that the peace talks were designed to deceive public opinion. On January 14, Litvinov cabled Moscow: "*L'Humanité* published the French diplomatic note to London, Rome, Tokyo, and Washington. Commenting on the British proposal that all governments existing in Russia should have representatives at the peace conference, Pichon said that the French government rejected the proposal because it ignored the policy of France and its Allies in Russia."

At that time, owing to the blockade, foreign newspapers did not reach Moscow. Litvinov's report, therefore, was highly valuable. It gave a clue as to the true intentions of the Allies.

Moscow learned, meanwhile, that the Allies would seek the annexation of Archangelsk, Baku, and a number of other cities and districts in Soviet Russia. Litvinov was immediately instructed to find out everything he could on this score.

At the beginning of 1919, Litvinov, Vorovsky, and their small staff constituted an important Soviet diplomatic enclave in the capitalist world, though it was in continuous danger.

Swedish policy was largely being shaped in Paris and London. And those two capitals were aware that every Soviet peace move aroused

sympathy among the war-weary nations. The Western capitals also learned that in Stockholm Litvinov was reaching the ears of local political, commercial, and industrial quarters, and that the idea of ending the intervention in Russia was winning supporters not only in Sweden but other countries as well. Downing Street followed Litvinov's activities in the Swedish capital with increasing annoyance. Clemenceau, too, feared Litvinov's contacts with foreign diplomats.

Under British and French pressure, the Swedish government broke off relations with Soviet Russia. Litvinov, Vorovsky, and the rest of the Mission staff were to be expelled.

Late at night, Vorovsky and Litvinov drew up a note to the Swedish government. On the morning of January 21 it was handed to the Foreign Minister. It said that Soviet Russia and the United States were having semi-official peace talks in Stockholm and that it would be a mistake to expel Soviet diplomats at that time.

Vorovsky asked on behalf of the government of the Russian Republic "to allow Mr. Litvinov to remain in Sweden and thus enable him to continue his mission of peace".

But it was not the Swedish Foreign Minister who had the final say. On January 30, 1919, the staff of the Soviet Mission headed by Vorovsky and Litvinov were compelled to leave. They travelled via Finland in a sealed railway carriage which was not opened until they reached the Soviet border.

Rosa Zaretskaya recollected: "It was a cold winter day. Litvinov jumped out of the carriage, inhaled the fresh air, and stretched his limbs. Then, Vorovsky emerged, followed by the rest of the staff. Wearied by the anxieties and the unusual mode of travel, Litvinov made a snowball and aimed it at the Mission's counsellor, knocking off his hat. Offended, the latter mumbled something about being in a bad mood. Litvinov smiled, and shouted, 'Comrades, the offensive continues.'"

The Soviet peace talks proposal set off a chain reaction, which became more and more intensive as the Red Army made progress in the battlefield. Wilson did not abandon the idea of establishing contacts with Soviet Russia. After Litvinov's departure from Stockholm new means of communicating with Moscow had to be found to arrange a conference on the Kizil Adalar Islands. Certainly, the move was no more than Wilson's sop to world opinion, which was clamouring ever more energetically to stop the intervention in Russia. William Bullitt, then Assistant in the U.S. Department of State and a member of the American delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, was sent to Soviet Russia. This, in a way, was a follow-up to Litvinov's talks with Wilson's representative in Stockholm.

In early March 1919, the U.S. diplomat arrived in Moscow. He came with a specific purpose: to find out on what terms the Bolsheviks would agree to begin peace negotiations. The talks with Bullitt were conducted by Chicherin and Litvinov. On March 11, Bullitt was received by Lenin. The joint text of a peace agreement was drawn up as a result.

Bullitt left for Paris, where he handed Wilson the proposals. They frustrated the designs of the Entente. In the draft, the Soviet government agreed to a territorial demarcation between all governments that had sprung up on the territory of Russia, provided the armed intervention was immediately stopped, foreign troops were withdrawn, and commercial relations resumed.

Wilson and Lloyd George were, of course, aware that all the governments in Russia, with the sole exception of the Soviet government, were maintained by foreign troops, and that the moment the foreign troops should leave, they were sure to collapse. But by the time Bullitt returned to Paris, the situation had changed. Kolchak<sup>43</sup> mounted his offensive, and the West lost interest in the peace project.

The idea of a conference on the Kizil Adalar Islands was scrapped. But the talks with Bullitt called for reconsideration. The fact of the matter was that the message to President Wilson had been drawn up by Litvinov and partly amended by Lenin, whereupon it was handed to the American diplomat. This was discovered 27 years later, when pertinent documents were found in the archives in connection with the 4th edition of Lenin's *Collected Works*.

On December 19, 1946, Vladimir Kruzhkov, then director of the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute, asked Litvinov in writing to elucidate a few historical facts:

"Since you took part in drafting the treaty with Bullitt and since you attended Lenin's conversation with Bullitt, and had personally, with Chicherin, handed Bullitt the text of the intended peace proposals of the Allied and associated governments, please tell us what part Lenin had played in drafting the project, and whether it could be considered as having been drafted by Lenin."

On January 27, 1947, Litvinov replied:

"I have been in hospital and could not answer your letter of December 19. As far as I can remember, the document you are asking about was not drawn up by Lenin in person, but by me after discussing Bullitt's proposals with Lenin. Of course, it was scrutinised by Chicherin and Lenin. Possibly, Lenin made a few corrections and changes."

Another letter to Litvinov, dated March 16, 1948, again requested details, and on March 18 Litvinov replied:

"As far as I can remember, the draft was drawn up by me on Lenin's instructions... I think this was the case because the drafting was preceded by my long-drawn-out negotiations with Bullitt which suggested the contents of the document."

The illusions created in the West by Kolchak's offensive, were soon dispelled. The Soviet proposals went down in history as one more proof of the Lenin government's peaceful plans during the grim days of the Civil War and the intervention of foreign troops.

Soon after completing the talks with Bullitt, Litvinov was appointed collegium member of the People's Commissariat for State Control. In addition to his other jobs. The Central Committee knew Litvinov and his efficient way of running things. People still remembered how well he had managed matters in Geneva, Zurich, and London, where he supervised the finances of the *Iskra* and the Party kitty. This was why, indeed, the Council of People's Commissars appointed Litvinov to the control agency. The first thing he did in this capacity was to set up a Central Bureau of Complaints. Similar bureaux soon appeared in all central institutions, where they played a big part in combating bureaucracy in the 1920s and 30s.

Now, Litvinov divided his time between two commissariats, that of Foreign Affairs and of State Control. He came home late, but found time to go through the newspapers. He had moved from the Metropole Hotel to a modest-sized two-room flat on the Moskva Embankment. Ivy was expected soon from London. Old friends, people with whom he had shared the hardships of exile, called on him from time to time at his new house. Among them were Svidersky and Klyshko, and also Alexander Tsyurupa<sup>44</sup> and Kamo. He was also seen at theatres and concerts.

Minutes of the Council of People's Commissars show that Litvinov hardly ever missed any sittings, and that he saw Lenin often.

Those who had overthrown the old world and become builders of a new, treated all matters, important and less important, with the same devotion. They discussed cooperatives, how to combat theft of telephone wire in Moscow streets, and storage of seed in remoter regions; they helped victims of anti-Jewish pogroms, combated profiteering, and fought the typhoid epidemic. All this concerned Litvinov as controller, and he was wholly immersed in the whirlpool of events.

The troubled and hungry summer of 1919 flashed by quickly. Wilson spoke of peace no longer. Denikin<sup>45</sup> had seized Kharkov and Tsaritsyn (now Volgograd). Kursk fell to his counter-revolutionary army on September 20, Voronezh on October 1, and Orel on Oc-



tober 13. The general was poised to capture Tula. In the autumn, the situation became still more desperate.

In those grim days, however, a ray of hope appeared that peace would be achieved along at least a small section of the enemy ring: the Estonian government said it was ready to begin peace talks. The Council of People's Commissars appointed Litvinov head of the negotiators, and Vorovsky a member of the delegation. The talks were to be held in Pskov, and Litvinov was about to leave for that city, when Vorovsky was suddenly taken ill.

The day before his departure, Litvinov sent Lenin a note: "Vorovsky has fallen ill and cannot go... Krasin, who says he is willing, will go instead of him. We are leaving tomorrow at 7 p.m. I have included in my mandate powers to sign a treaty. It is best for them to know that our intentions are serious."

Litvinov and Krasin started the talks with an Estonian delegation in Pskov. It was planned to complete them in Tartu. But at this time, having received arms from Britain and France, and using Estonia as his base, Yudenich<sup>46</sup> started an offensive against Petrograd. The talks were broken off. Litvinov and Krasin returned to Moscow.

A few days later, however, carrying a mandate signed by Lenin, Litvinov set out for Copenhagen on a special assignment.

### Chapter 3

#### THE COPENHAGEN ASSIGNMENT

An important postwar mission facing Soviet diplomats was to obtain the release of Russian war prisoners who were being detained in Western Europe. Negotiations proceeded through the Red Cross and with unofficial representatives of the governments concerned. The Danish government was relatively tractable. There was hope of success. But communications with Denmark were cut, and Moscow did not know if Yakov Surits, a professional revolutionary who had spent years in exile and was appointed Soviet envoy to Copenhagen after the Revolution, had been able to accomplish anything.

Then Surits returned home, and Lenin, who was deeply troubled by the plight of the POW's, summoned him.

"How are you, my Danish fugitive? And how is your mission?"

Surits said the talks broke down because the Danes had asked for too much money—a sum the Soviet government could not afford to pay.

Lenin jested: "You're a registered merchant's son, and a Jew to boot. How come you failed to strike a good bargain? Well, since you didn't, you're going East, to Afghanistan, as our envoy. The British have interests there, but so do we. We want to be on friendly terms with our neighbours."

Meanwhile, the situation of the Russian war prisoners in Europe deteriorated. In early 1919, the Entente and Germany agreed that no Russian POW's would be released without British and French consent. The reason was that the POW's were being recruited into counter-revolutionary whiteguard armies.

On January 21, 1919, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs protested in a note to the Entente governments: "The government of the Russian Soviet Republic censures the behaviour of those who, spurning elementary human feeling, want to force Russian war prisoners to take part in a war against the Russian people... This is contrary to the basic principles of international relations and reminiscent of barbarous times in human history."

The Russian war prisoners' situation in Germany and other coun-

tries was desperate. They had lived far away from their country, in a sorry condition, for many years. Their families missed them. The Revolution needed them. Daring escapes were made from POW camps. The fugitives tried crossing the front lines. Many died en route from hunger and cold.

POW's from Hardelegen, a German POW camp, sent an appeal for help to a conference of the Second International in Berne in February 1919.

"We Russian POW's kept in Hardelegen camp, numbering 4,500," the letter said, "appeal to you ... to secure our earliest return home... The reasons we are given for being detained, namely, famine, disruption of railways, and disturbances in Russia, are irrelevant. More than half the POW's have already been sent home. We are quite prepared to endure the famine and other privations with our families and the rest of the 175 million Russians. We consider any further delay an act of force."

During their captivity, the Russian POW's wrote, they had endured greater privations and greater suffering than POW's of other nations. Yet all other POW's had rejoined their families, while they, abused by old Russia and Germany, about half a million in all, were being detained indefinitely behind walls and under guard, and subjected to fresh suffering in conditions that had not changed since the war.

The POW's wrote they were willing to brave death, so long as they could go home, and hoped the socialist conference in Berne would come to their aid.

But theirs was a voice in the wilderness. By 1919, Russian captives had increased in number. Foreign troops that occupied Arkhangelsk and Vologda shipped peaceful citizens out of Russia. No few Russians were in British bondage.

On August 13, 1919, Georgy Chicherin, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, radioed all governments about the brutal treatment of Russian POW's in British captivity.

"With revulsion and anger," his telegram read, "the Soviet Government has learned about the inhuman treatment of Russian POW's by the British in Arkhangelsk... Red Army men who escaped from British captivity, have brought word that many of their comrades were shot on the spot after capture... They, too, were told they would be shot for refusing to join the Slavo-British counter-revolutionary legion."

Meanwhile, the Red Army was developing its offensive. Gradually, foreign troops were being forced to leave Russia. There were British soldiers in Russian POW camps. The Soviet government made it known it would differentiate treatment of captured British soldiers,

depending on whether they had been sent to Soviet Russia against their will or had volunteered. British Red Cross representatives Colonel Parker and Miss Adams were allowed to visit the British POW's, and saw they were humanely treated.

At about this time, the British POW's asked their government to exchange them for Russian POW's in Europe. But Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon dragged his feet. Not until November 7 did his government finally agree to negotiate with a Soviet delegate in neutral Denmark. The Soviet government appointed Maxim Litvinov. London picked MP James O'Grady.

Litvinov's departure from Moscow was planned for mid-November. His stay in Denmark was likely to be long, and he prepared for it carefully, discussing all possible eventualities with Chicherin.

Rosa Zaretskaya of the Foreign Commissariat, who knew several foreign languages and was an experienced secretary, would accompany him. Up to Tartu, he would also be accompanied by August Umbliia, a St. Petersburg worker who was one of Chicherin's bodyguards and secretary of the Party cell at the Foreign Commissariat.

Umbliia objected to Zaretskaya's going with Litvinov. He said the delegation should consist of Party members only, and in her stead suggested Diza Milanova, who had acquitted herself splendidly in the October fighting at Revel, as Tallinn was called until 1917.

It so happened that Lenin learned of Umbliia's objections. He asked Lev Kamenev, a member of the Politbureau, to speak to Umbliia and settle the matter fairly.

Umbliia convened his Party cell. Kamenev asked its members to speak their minds, then took the floor himself. He said Litvinov's mission was a difficult one, and that two assistants would be better than one. He made clear that the Party trusted people who were not its members, and it was essential to respect the intelligentsia, without which the Soviet system would not cope with its tasks.

The Party cell agreed, and the matter was settled.

Shortly before their departure, Litvinov summoned Milanova and Zaretskaya. He asked what they would wear on their trip. The women shrugged their shoulders. They said they had nothing aside from what they had on that moment—Milanova a military leather jacket, and Zaretskaya a warm coat.

Litvinov said money was short and they would have to go without overcoats. But he wanted them to wear flounced dresses.

"Why flounced? What have flounces got to do with the revolution?"

A pause. Then Litvinov said:



"You'll see. I expect you here in two hours. If you have no flounced dresses of your own, borrow them."

Two hours later, Milanova and Zaretskaya were back in Litvinov's office. They stood beside the window, wondering what would come next.

The Foreign Commissariat's chief accountant entered the room, carrying a napkin-covered plate.

"Here they are," he said, placing the plate on Litvinov's desk.

The women thought the accountant had brought something good to eat. But when he raised the napkin they were disappointed to see diamonds.

Litvinov explained briefly:

"We've got to secure the war prisoners' release. These diamonds from the Tsar's treasury will buy their release. To get them to Copenhagen you will sew them in the hems and flounces of your dresses."

That night Litvinov went to see Lenin once more.

On November 7, 1919, Soviet Russia celebrated the second anniversary of the Revolution. Lenin spoke at a Bolshoi Theatre meeting, and stayed on to see the concert that followed. But his rest was brief. He still had things to do: chair a meeting of the Council of People's Commissars and Council of Defence, examine supplies that were going to workers in the Urals, and deal with a dozen other things.

Lenin asked Chicherin to keep him informed of Litvinov's mission. Chicherin wondered, among other things, whether Litvinov's trip to a neutral country could be used, aside from the issue of war prisoners, to sound out the question of peace.

Lenin's answer was prompt. He attached a Politbureau decision saying Litvinov's departure should be hastened. Now, the day before the mission would leave, Lenin received Litvinov.

"When you arrive," he said, "send the Soviet government's peace proposal to all embassies in Copenhagen. Follow the same line as in Stockholm. We want everybody to know we seek peace. And obtain the release of our POW's by all means."

Litvinov was given two mandates: the first, to negotiate with governments of countries bordering on the former Russian Empire, and with other governments hostile to the Soviet Republic; the second, to negotiate the exchange of POW's.

Before Litvinov's departure, Krasin, People's Commissar for Trade and Industry, handed him one more mandate: to hold commercial talks with the Scandinavian countries.

In the evening, Litvinov's group set out for Tallinn. On the border, they were to be met by Tomiskas, a secretary of the Estonian Foreign

Ministry. The Estonian government warned that the moment Litvinov reached Tallinn, it would place him under the protection of the British authorities and renounce responsibility for his safety.

The rickety old railway car they were travelling in, was often stopped owing to disrepair of the tracks. It took a long time to reach Pskov. There, the Moscow delegation was met by the Estonians. The Entente was blockading Russia's western border, and capitalist Estonia was taking part in the blockade.

Now they would cross the front. A covered lorry, much like an ambulance in appearance, drove up. Its windows were pasted over with dark paper. Litvinov and his companions sat in the back, and an armed guard got into the driver's cabin.

In Tartu, Litvinov and his companions alighted. The local press reported Bolshevik Litvinov's arrival. A curious crowd had gathered in the town square. Through this crowd Litvinov drove to his hotel.

In Tartu, Umblia had said farewell. He returned to Pskov. Litvinov discussed formalities with spokesmen of the Estonian Foreign Ministry, then set out for Tallinn in the company of Estonian diplomats and gendarmes.

The gendarmes were nosy. They accompanied Litvinov everywhere he went, even the toilet. They also tried to "patronise" his lady helpers. But the latter objected, and were left alone.

In the Estonian capital, Litvinov's escort of gendarmes was doubled. All round him, Litvinov saw signs of war. Warships rode anchor in the harbour ready for action. The hull of the British cruiser that would take Litvinov to Copenhagen, sparkled steel-grey in the sun.

Talks with the Foreign Minister concerning a cease-fire continued for several days. The Minister and his officials kept reminding Litvinov that they could not be responsible for his life. Russian counter-revolutionaries, of whom there were many in the Estonian capital, could be expected to attack any minute. Milanova carried a passport in the name of Korobovkina, but people in Tallinn knew her, which complicated the situation.

As usual, Litvinov kept the same daily routine: breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the same time every day. He asked a Foreign Ministry official to show his companions and himself the sights of Tallinn.

Finally, Litvinov's group boarded the British cruiser. The officer who received the Soviet diplomats aboard, was curt and official. He showed Litvinov to his cabin, and said the women would be at the other end of the cruiser. He also warned that none of them should speak with the crew.

The cruiser passed the blockading line of ships, and set its course for Copenhagen. It was raining, and the sea was choppy. With no one on deck, the seamen having been ordered to stay in their quarters, the cruiser looked deserted.

In the evening, an officer came to Litvinov's cabin to escort Milanova and Zaretskaya to their cabin. They walked along the rolling deck, past the big guns and cases of ammunition, thinking with horror that a sharp diamond might any minute cut the cloth and drop to the deck.

The cabin was to them like a cell in death row. They sat in silence for a while, then returned to Litvinov's cabin. Thus passed the night. A new day dawned. As before, the deck was deserted. Now and then, an officer would flit by, checking that no seaman left his quarters.

After dark, they saw the lights of Malmö. And on the third day, the cruiser dropped anchor in Copenhagen.

Proper, prosperous, and quiet Copenhagen was a model of tranquility. Neutral Denmark was selling butter and bacon both to the Entente and to Germany, accumulating wealth. True, for Litvinov gloom was cast on the general well-being by the wretched look of the Russian POW's, though most of them were out of Copenhagen, on farms, in camps, and transit pens.

The Soviet delegation moved into 4th-floor hotel rooms without a lift. That was cheaper. Litvinov asked Zaretskaya to keep accounts and put down how much they spent every day.

The very first hour on Danish soil there was a row. A rumour had spread in the hotel that Bolsheviks had arrived from Russia. The rich pig farmers who had come to the capital for a holiday, immediately signed out of the hotel. The hotelier was in a panic. He wailed that he was ruined, but did not dare turn out the Soviet diplomat: after all, Litvinov was the guest of the Foreign Ministry.

That was not all. Whiteguard rowdies appeared before the hotel. They tried to enter the building. Danish Communists, however, had set up a round-the-clock guard, seeing to the safety of Litvinov's group.

The secret police sent men to follow Litvinov: seven of them—rosy-cheeked, wearing identical suits and hats, some with, some without walking sticks. The "magnificent seven", as Litvinov called them, stayed on his heels wherever he went every day in the ten months of his stay in Denmark.

Gradually, the Soviet diplomat got accustomed to the police spies. They were quite unlike those who had once hunted for him all over Europe. Soon, Litvinov began using them. When he needed a cab, he asked the spies to summon one, which the latter did.

Milanova and Zaretskaya had their own spies, who followed them unobtrusively at a respectable distance. This was the two girls' first visit to Copenhagen, and one day Milanova called one of the spies and said he would do better to show them the town. He was glad to oblige. When they returned to the hotel after seeing the sights, he fell back.

Litvinov did not object to the surveillance. But the police president felt constrained to call on him and say the plain-clothesmen were not watching but rather protecting him against a whiteguard attack.

Litvinov's stay in Copenhagen was covered by the press. The Danish papers printed all sorts of wild rumours, obviously supplied by London. The restaurant where Litvinov and his companions often lunched, was frequented by people who wanted to see the Soviet women. The waiter who served the neighbouring tables eagerly responded to questions, and said that the two were real nationalised Soviet women.

Good tips rewarded his pains. Until Milanova taught him a lesson: she spoke her mind to him loudly, and in good Danish.

Sympathy for Soviet Russia was gradually welling up. The October Revolution helped the Socialist Labour Party of Denmark to assert itself ever more resolutely. One of its members was especially insistent on meeting Litvinov. It was none other than Martin Andersen Nexø, the Danish writer.

On November 27, 1919, the *Politiken* reported that Bolshevik diplomat Litvinov had come to Denmark to negotiate resumption of diplomatic relations. It reported that Nexø had waited for Litvinov in vain for several hours. On returning home he had written the following letter:

"I came to see you and pay my respects between three and four yesterday. But I was told you were out. I want to see you for two reasons. First, to express my deep admiration for what you and your comrades have done in Russia for all of us, and this on my own behalf and on behalf of the revolutionary workers of Denmark. Besides, I want to place my writings at Soviet Russia's disposal. It would please me if Soviet Russia, of which I am as fond as of my own homeland, should be able to use some of my works for the good of mankind.

"If you find it possible, I should be glad to visit you. Just let me know of the day and hour. If not, please convey our fraternal greetings to the Russian workers..."

Some years later, the circumstances of the case became public knowledge. Nexø had come to see Litvinov when whiteguards were raising a rumpus outside the hotel. Litvinov had told his companions to let in no one except spokesmen of the Danish Foreign Ministry.



All other visitors were to be told that he was out. Milanova and Zaretskaya did so, for they did not know who Martin Andersen Nexö was.

Two days later, Litvinov received Nexö's letter. He replied immediately, and the two met at his hotel.

Methodically, Litvinov worked towards his goal, the object of his stay in Denmark. On Lenin's advice, he sent the Soviet government's peace offer to the foreign embassies in Copenhagen. But as in Stockholm, his message was, in fact, hushed up. This time, however, he was not expelled, though rumours of the Soviet peace action began to spread in the Danish capital. The commercial world was the first to stir.

Litvinov studied the situation in Denmark and the neighbouring capitals. He sought contact with industrialists and diplomats, and also gathered information about the Russian POW's. The newspapers were informative. Milanova and Zaretskaya helped him make a daily review of the press for Moscow.

Relations with the Danish Foreign Ministry, at least in the early period, were bearable. But matters were in the hands of the British, not the Danes. Labour MP O'Grady arrived in Copenhagen, and the talks began on November 25.

London had known why it chose O'Grady, a veteran trade union boss, to negotiate with Litvinov. When the World War had begun, the rebel Irish refused to fight for England. Irishman O'Grady was ordered to mobilise his countrymen. He did, and was thanked for it by King and Government.

O'Grady was thought to know Russia. Probably because he and Arthur Henderson, the Labour Party leader, had gone to Petrograd to buck up Kerensky and urge the starving, war-weary country to continue fighting.

Outwardly, O'Grady was jovial. He was of above average height, portly, unfailingly affable, and seemingly eager to secure mutual understanding. Only once did he observe in passing that it was hard to find a common tongue with a country that had, as he put it, liquidated its monarch. Litvinov replied that if he remembered correctly, the heads of English monarchy had twice rolled off the block. O'Grady quickly changed the subject and vanished from sight behind a cloud of cigar smoke.

During nearly all of Litvinov's conversations with O'Grady, an unsmiling grey little Scotland Yard man attended. He passed himself off as the Irishman's secretary.

The negotiations proceeded slowly. O'Grady came out with a suc-

cession of new versions of the POW exchange. Litvinov patiently repeated the Soviet demand that all prisoners of war and all detained civilians should be released and shipped to Russia, that the Entente countries should lift their ban on shipping them out of Germany.

Every day or two the Irishman broke off the talks. He said he was asking London for instructions. Litvinov waited. He disregarded trivialities and insisted on the main thing—that all POW's and civilians should be released. O'Grady bargained: "You give us two, we give you one."

"Why?"

"Not all of your people want to go back to Russia."

Litvinov said he wanted to see those who did not. O'Grady replied that he could not allow it, that it was outside his competence.

In early December, O'Grady set rigid demands highly unfavourable for Russia, and hinted that if Litvinov did not sign an agreement, the talks would be broken off. Litvinov said he needed time to contact his government. Until that day, his coded messages went via the Danish radio. But just then Litvinov was suddenly told he could no longer use the radio.

O'Grady insisted on having the agreement signed immediately. Litvinov began discussing all the points again: the first, the second, the third...

O'Grady, vexed, would not yield ground. And at this point, Litvinov handed him a prepared package.

"What is this?" the Irishman asked.

"Soviet Russia's proposals for trade with Britain," Litvinov said. "We're prepared to buy British goods, and will pay in gold."

It was O'Grady's turn to ask for time to examine the proposals. Three days later, O'Grady returned with the package unopened. Those had been Curzon's orders. The Irishman said he was breaking off the talks, and leaving for Britain.

But Litvinov had won 72 hours.

One night, Litvinov and his assistants were having dinner at the hotel restaurant as usual. A Swede from a neighbouring table, who had always politely greeted Litvinov, brought belated news: the Reds had crushed Yudenich's counter-revolutionary army at the approaches to Petrograd. On the following day, Copenhagen's yellow press carried a piece saying Milanova had signed so many death sentences in Russia that she had lost use of her right hand. The story was by a Swedish journalist.

The Red Army victories had their effect. O'Grady did not leave for England. The negotiations were renewed. On a most unctuous note. No, he, O'Grady, was always aware that Russia, a great country,

had to be reckoned with, even though it was now called a republic. The Irishman's secretary was absent. He had fallen ill. And the Danish Foreign Ministry informed Litvinov that he could use the radio station as before if he wished: the official who had made the "mistake" of forbidding it, had been punished.

After the rout of Yudenich's army, the blockade of the Soviet Republic went to pieces. The Entente began showing signs of common sense. It admitted that it was desirable to start trading with Russia. Curzon feared that other countries might get a bigger piece of the pie. Denikin's final defeat and the British being compelled to leave the Caucasus, had the effect of a cold shower. The Red Army offensive under Frunze<sup>47</sup> against Wrangel<sup>48</sup> caused a panic.

Litvinov's connections with Moscow hung on a thin thread: his telegrams were in a primitive digital cipher coded by Milanova. He knew of the titanic efforts that Lenin and his closest associates, the undergrounders and emigrés of yesterday who now comprised the Soviet government, were making. It was clearly visible from Copenhagen how Lenin's shrewd and inspired moves were throwing a spanner into the works of his high and mighty adversaries, making London and Paris and all Europe give ground.

But Litvinov knew that the fight was only beginning, that hard battles were in the offing, and not between armies only, but also in diplomatic offices. He also knew there would be setbacks as well as victories.

Britain was still determined to delay the departure of the POW's to Russia. One day, O'Grady again broke off the talks, while the grey little man from Scotland Yard redoubled his efforts. He sent people to Litvinov's hotel to harass the Soviet diplomat. One day a stranger arrived, saying he represented a furniture factory. He wanted to know if the sensational news from Soviet Russia was true. A man in a seaman's uniform came. He acted still more primitively, demanding that Litvinov supply him with revolutionary literature. Litvinov asked him to leave at once. Then a strange cable came from Stockholm, of just two words: *Emre kommen*. Litvinov wondered who might be coming from Stockholm to see him. A few days later, a total stranger stepped into his hotel room, saying he was a Swedish journalist. He added reassuringly that on the way from the railway station he had changed his appearance three times in order to confuse the police spies. Litvinov chased him out.

The "magnificent seven" had been reinforced: new spies appeared in the corridors and in the hotel lobby. The hotelier was in a frenzy: he said owing to Litvinov respectable people would never again stop at

his hotel. He returned Litvinov's advance payment, and asked him to leave immediately.

O'Grady pretended anger. Certainly, he would try and help. Through the Irishman, Litvinov leased rooms in an out-of-town hotel, but the Danish government forbade him to move there. He and his assistants were then compelled to settle for a third-rate guest house. And there, too, spies were very much in evidence. Litvinov feared a provocation, even a physical attack.

In the end, however, the Danish authorities permitted Litvinov to move into the out-of-town hotel. The Irishman said he hoped the hotel would sign a contract until January 30, and arranged to meet Litvinov to discuss formalities. But he did not come. His grey little secretary announced that O'Grady had left for London. He had liver trouble and went to see his doctor.

Obviously, the talks would drag out. Litvinov tried to divine the intrigues spun by the British diplomatic service. He looked for a solution. Then, unexpectedly, he was deprived of his cipher-coded connection with Moscow. Felix Dzerzhinsky<sup>49</sup> informed him in a cable from Moscow that the Soviet code used in communications with Copenhagen, Berlin, and one more European capital, had been cracked. He asked Litvinov to confirm that he was sure of his assistants.

On reading the telegram, Litvinov turned livid, then paled. He wrote briefly on a scrap of paper, "I am certain", and asked Milanova to send the cable to Dzerzhinsky at once.

When he returned to Moscow, he told Dzerzhinsky how, he thought, the code had been cracked: a tsarist general, former chief of the tsarist Foreign Ministry's Coding Department, was in England and had probably done the job.

O'Grady returned from London. He said unctuously that the British government could not accept the Soviet terms of exchanging POW's, and was offering new terms. "The Soviet government is to blame for the delay," he said.

Litvinov cabled Chicherin, asking him to take immediate action.

On February 10, Chicherin sent a message to Curzon in London: "The Soviet Government ... protests energetically against the claim that the negotiations are taking so long through the fault of the Soviet Government. The Soviet terms were formulated by our delegate at the very beginning, and he has made no new demands throughout the period of the negotiations. On the contrary, some of the original Soviet demands were either withdrawn or reduced... On the other hand, Mr. O'Grady's powers were so limited that he was compelled to consult London over every trifle, and on a few occasions awaited replies and new instructions for several weeks. The responsibility for



the delays, therefore, falls entirely upon the British government."

Chicherin's telegram created the desired impression. Doubly so, because the Red Army had scored more victories. No longer did O'Grady complain about his liver, nor did he leave Copenhagen. On February 12, 1920, Litvinov and O'Grady signed an accord on the POW's. The Soviet diplomat had secured the Irishman's agreement that the POW's would go to Petrograd on British ships.

The first shipload of Russian hostages seized in Archangelsk, Vologda, and other northern regions of Russia left Britain in March 1920. The British were eager to obtain the freedom of their pilots and senior officers, scions of aristocratic families, in Soviet captivity.

What the Russian hostages had endured in Britain, and how they were shipped home, is a story in its own right. Here is the tale of Ivan Krivenko, former regimental commander and member of the Communist Party:

"We were held for something like eight months. During all this time, we were given one postcard each to write home... We were denied newspapers, and knew nothing of what was happening at home. This was very hard to endure. So we decided to call a hunger strike, demanding papers and better rations. The hunger strike lasted four days. We lay on our backs and refused to get up. Still, the British conceded no ground.

"A sergeant of the guard who knew a little Russian came to our barrack-room on the fourth day. He said I was being summoned by the camp commander.

"'Aren't you tired of your little game?' the commander asked me. I said, let us have some newspapers, and give us better food.

"The commander said we would get rations for all the days of the hunger strike, and warned me that my people should not overeat.

"'Tomorrow you will leave for Russia. We're exchanging hostages,' he said in parting.

"The men were jubilant. We had a Party meeting, and Party members said they would see to it people should not overeat after the hunger strike. Two days later, we were brought to Newcastle and went from there by train to Portsmouth. It was the month of March 1920. The *Times* and the *Daily Mail* of March 11 and 12 carried our photographs. We saw them when waiting to board the ship. They put us in the ship's hold, and we sailed to Denmark. In Copenhagen, the ship dropped anchor. We wanted to see the city at least from afar, but leaving the hold was strictly forbidden. Two of our comrades broke the ban, and were punished.

"The stay in Copenhagen was short, just a few hours. I was summoned to the officers' mess. There were two men at the table—one

stocky, slightly over 40, with a plain worker's face, the other a bit older. The first one said he was Litvinov. The other was an Englishman, O'Grady. Litvinov asked me to take a seat and wanted to know how we were being treated. My reply was short. I did not complain.

"Litvinov said there was to be an exchange of hostages, and that all terms had been agreed with Mr. O'Grady.

"I was invited to a meal. There were bananas on the table. At that time I did not know what they were and how they were eaten. To avoid embarrassment, I said I was not hungry.

"All hostages were allowed to come on deck. Litvinov addressed us. He said Soviet Russia was alive, growing stronger, and waiting for us. I made a short speech, too, thanking the Soviet government for its concern. Then Litvinov departed, after letting us have five dollars for cigarettes at my request.

"The ship took us to Libava (now Liepāja). From there we went by train to Riga, and finally crossed the border home."

Spring had come to Copenhagen. Lilacs bloomed. The city was still more beautiful, still more prosperous, still cleaner.

Litvinov had moved back downtown. The days were filled with cares, visits, meetings with O'Grady and other diplomats. Though the agreement had been signed, there were still no wholesale shipments of POW's to Russia. A mass of formalities had to be completed. The POW's had to be brought closer to Copenhagen. Here they had to be fed and provided food supplies for the voyage home.

Litvinov and his little band lived most frugally. Zaretskaya still kept the accounts, entering every spent penny. They ate modestly. One day, Litvinov was late for dinner. In his absence, Zaretskaya ordered oysters, an impermissible luxury that wrecked the day's budget. Litvinov ate in silence, but when rising said, "By the way, pickles taste a lot better."

Milanova and Zaretskaya decided to make him pay for that remark. One night, having ordered in advance, the women had oysters, while Litvinov was served a pickled cucumber. They ate in silence, with Litvinov mumbling something under his breath. Then the three of them raised their heads, looked at each other, and burst out laughing.

From time to time, Litvinov himself would overstep the budget, succumbing to the temptation to see a concert or ballet. They went in turns, so that at least one of them would stay with the suitcases. One day Milanova and Zaretskaya went to a symphony concert, with Litvinov "holding the fort". But the temptation was too much for him. He went to the theatre after all, and sat through the performance on

pins and needles, fancying all the time that someone might be rummaging about in their suitcases.

Funny little things occurred, too. Shortly before Jewish Passover, one of the local papers revealed that Litvinov was the alias of a Russian Jewish revolutionary, Max Wallach. On the following day, a Copenhagen Jew brought a basket of Passover goodies to Litvinov's hotel: wine, matzos, knedlach, and the like. The package arrived in Litvinov's absence, and Zaretskaya, the secretary, had no choice but to accept it. Litvinov, when he saw the package, was annoyed. "Take it away," he said. Out of solidarity, Zaretskaya, too, was reluctant to touch the "bourgeois gift" which, moreover, had religious overtones. Milanova, who was a Lutheran, knew what to do: she hid the basket in her room, and shared its contents with Zaretskaya on the quiet.

A delegation of the Central Council of Russian Cooperatives arrived in Copenhagen from Moscow in mid-April 1920. It had been sent to negotiate all basic issues that existed between Soviet Russia and Britain.

Leonid Krasin arrived with wife and children. He was to go to London to continue the talks, and, if the situation was favourable, stay there a longer time. Krasin was accompanied by Victor Nogin,<sup>50</sup> a few advisers, and technicians—a fairly large delegation.

Krasin had had to go, because London refused to receive Litvinov. Downing Street could not forgive him his book, *The Bolshevik Revolution*, which had come out in London in 1918 in two printings, ending on the note that the triumphant march of socialism would not be stopped.

Moscow asked, "Who do you wish to receive if you object to Litvinov?" London replied, "We don't want any Bolsheviks; we want to trade with Russia."

Chicherin told Lenin about it. The latter chuckled, and suggested asking London if it would negotiate with a non-governmental delegation. The answer was yes, it would be fine if the Russian cooperatives sent their people. Litvinov in Copenhagen was advised that he had been appointed member of the delegation and could begin talks with representatives of the Supreme Council of the Entente in the Danish capital.

Krasin and Litvinov lost no time. Litvinov had prepared the ground well for dialogue on diplomatic and economic issues.

The delegation registered at the same hotel as Litvinov. In his usual style, Krasin picked the best suites on the first floor.

Litvinov barely managed to contain himself. He asked Krasin,

"May I inquire, my dear Leonid, what money you will use to pay for those expensive suites?"

Krasin lost his power of speech. Then he murmured something about maintaining Soviet prestige. Later, recalling the injury, he complained to Zaretskaya:

"That Litvinov of yours—a miser if there ever was one."

Krasin's remark fell on fertile soil. Litvinov's group had been in Copenhagen for six months, he had hundreds of thousands at his disposal, but neither of his assistants ever received a salary. Nor did he take any himself. He had warned the two women before they left Moscow that food and lodgings was all they should count on.

When spring came, Zaretskaya hinted shyly that Milanova and she needed light coats: their shabby clothes were attracting undesirable attention. Litvinov interrupted her, and asked what a coat would cost. He frowned at the price, mumbled something under his breath, and said he would think it over.

Was he really a miser? Some thought he was. Those who had known him in former times, were of a different opinion. For nearly 20 years, Litvinov had no permanent home. He lived all over Europe, and always in dire need. He remembered the Party's financial hardships. Those times he would never forget. Even as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs he kept the family accounts and forbade excessive spending.

He often spoke of economising. At the dawn of his revolutionary career in 1903, in a letter to Georgy Bakalov, a Bulgarian writer, he complained that the *Iskra* man in the Balkans, one Georgiev, had not remitted the money due for 15 copies of the paper. "It's not done," he wrote, and asked Bakalov to speak to the defaulter.

Thirty years later, he asked the Council of People's Commissars to allocate money to a collective farm near Moscow to buy lorries, and to build a club. But when a prominent diplomat was prompted to speak to him and have him ask the government to grant special rations to higher ranking members of the Foreign Commissariat's staff, Litvinov replied angrily:

"Live like everybody else. I'll do no such thing. Be economical."

That was how they lived in Copenhagen, saving every penny. Once a week, Zaretskaya showed Litvinov the accounts. But the two women were young and pretty, and naturally wanted good things to wear.

They tried to persuade Litvinov to change his ways. In the end, Milanova cabled Chicherin, complaining that they were given no pocket money. Chicherin knew Litvinov would not untie the purse strings even if ordered. So he resorted to a trick: he requested Litvi-



nov to give Milanova money to buy him a pair of shoes. And promptly let Milanova know she could spend it on herself.

After Milanova had deciphered the first part of Chicherin's reply, hiding its last lines from Litvinov, the latter looked at her suspiciously, mumbled under his breath, and said he would buy Chicherin's shoes himself.

The Copenhagen talks with the Entente proceeded successfully. Swedish businessmen, too, took a realistic view of the world situation. The new political regime in Russia, they saw, would endure, and trading with it could be profitable. The Soviet Republic deposited 25 million crowns in gold in a Swedish bank. The bank allowed a credit of 100 million. Krasin signed a contract for 1,000 locomotives badly needed in Russia, with a Swedish syndicate. And at the end of May 1920, Leonid Krasin and his group left for London.

Shortly before Krasin's departure for London, Litvinov's wife and little Misha (later also Tania), came to Copenhagen. The papers issued by the British authorities said the bearer, Ivy Litvinova, wife of a political emigré, was going to Russia with her son and daughter for good.

O'Grady learned of the arrival of Litvinov's family. He was stunned, and asked Litvinov if it was true his wife and children were going to Russia.

"How long will they stay there?" he asked.

"Forever."

His family's arrival did not change Litvinov's way of life. There were no family suites on the 4th floor, and they moved to the 3rd. In other ways nothing changed, including the economising.

After the agreement with the British had been signed, the Scandinavian countries, Austria, Hungary, Switzerland, Belgium, Italy, and France also agreed to release Russian POW's. It was understood the Russians would leave for home in the early autumn.

Many things had to be settled. As plenipotentiary of the Council of People's Commissars, Litvinov continued political and economic negotiations with the Entente Supreme Council. Besides, he had made deals with Danish and other European firms, buying and shipping goods to Russia at bargain prices.

On August 26, 1920, Litvinov let Chicherin know he had turned down a few proposals for footwear, but would now look around again. The average price per pair, he wrote, was 30 to 40 crowns. Italy was offering a 100,000 pairs of military boots at 40 liras each. Besides it was offering flannel shirts at 19 liras, work suits at 16, trousers at 14, and greatcoats at 65. The Italians were also prepared to sell a few

hundred airplanes at a relatively low price, and also some 400 lorries. Could he offer Italy Batum oil in payment? In Trieste, Litvinov added, he had bought 1,500 tons of copper, which was being shipped via Vladivostok.

Chicherin showed Litvinov's message to Lenin. Lenin underlined the 100,000 pairs of boots, the greatcoats, the few hundred airplanes, and the lorries. He suggested that Alexei Rykov<sup>51</sup> and Efroim Skliansky<sup>52</sup> should at once discuss Litvinov's proposals with Andrei Lezhava, Deputy Commissar for Foreign Trade. The goods should not be allowed to slip through their fingers. The commodities Litvinov purchased were shipped to Soviet Russia by sea or rail.

The French wanted to discuss terms of trade. A contract had been concluded with Jensen & Co., a Danish firm, for seed shipments, but it was dragging its feet and the matter had to be settled. Swedish businessmen wanted to know if there would be an airline between Stockholm and Moscow via Petrograd. The Norwegians asked if Russia wanted to buy herring, while itinerant diplomats were sounding out the question of concessions.

Everything had to be agreed, all questions had to be answered. Litvinov travelled about the city ... in the company of police spies. They rushed about on his heels, cursing their lot, and praying the Soviet diplomat would soon leave quiet, prosperous Copenhagen.

The first ship from Britain to pick up the POW's arrived in September. Litvinov, accompanied by representatives of the Danish and German Red Cross, went to a POW camp near Copenhagen. A German doctor was in charge. Emaciated, clothed in rags, but happy they were going home, the POW's rushed aboard the ship, crowding into cabins and holds. Litvinov, Milanova, Zaretskaya, members of the Danish and German Red Cross, and some diplomats came aboard. Lazar Shatskin, first secretary of the young Communist International, compelled to leave Germany owing to the anti-communist terror there, was also on board. A Copenhagen newsman was taking pictures.

The time of departure arrived. The soldiers crowded the deck. They had no idea of all the subtleties of the ten-months-long diplomatic battle. All they knew was that the battle was won by their country, the Soviet Russia they did not yet know. They waited impatiently for the whistle to blow, and cheered loudly when the steamer finally set off.

## Chapter 4

### THE ESTONIA ASSIGNMENT

After his return from Copenhagen, Litvinov's stay in Moscow was fairly short. Soviet Russia was looking for economic contacts with Western Europe. In February 1920, it concluded a peace treaty and established diplomatic relations with Estonia. This was splendidly accomplished by Leonid Krasin.

Soon after the treaty was signed in Tallinn (then still called Revel), Isidore Gukovsky, an old Bolshevik who was in the Party since 1898, and had worked on the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn* with Litvinov in 1905, was assigned to the diplomatic service. He did not have the status of ambassador, and was formally a representative of the Central Council of Cooperatives and plenipotentiary of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade. In this capacity he set about arranging economic ties with Estonia. Estonia's importance as a commercial partner increased. With its help Soviet Russia hoped to arrange trade with Western Europe.

Gukovsky, however, did not stay long in Tallinn. His health, undermined during his underground years, deteriorated. He went to Moscow for medical treatment, had a car accident, and died in September 1921.

His successor was Litvinov. For a good reason. He had negotiated with the Estonian government before. Besides, the mission in Copenhagen had been carried off brilliantly, with a number of political and economic problems being settled to boot.

In early January 1921, Litvinov left for Tallinn as political and commercial envoy. On January 13, he handed the Estonian government his credentials signed by Lenin.

In Tallinn, Litvinov first stayed at the Golden Lion Hotel, where other members of the Soviet political and trade mission lived. Later, he moved into a modest flat, and still later into Hotel Bristol, also patronised by members of the mission.

The Soviet colony lived in a climate of comradeship, harmony, and mutual respect. Litvinov employed a few local Communists to help out at the mission.

Litvinov's internationalism, a quality he shared with all Communists, had deep roots, because he had developed as a revolutionary in enforced exile abroad. For many years, indeed, he lived among people of different nationalities, and had learned to find among them friends close in spirit and ideas.

In the early years of the Soviet diplomatic service, Chicherin and Litvinov used to enlist the services of foreign Communists in drawing up important Soviet diplomatic documents, and never had occasion to regret it.

Walmar Adams, member of the Estonian Labour Commune, who was then editor of *The Hammer* in Tartu, a man who had seen the inside of many a prison in bourgeois Estonia, got to know Litvinov soon after the latter's arrival in Tallinn.

Adams: "I met Litvinov at the Soviet Mission in Tallinn in 1921. He suggested I help him out with specifically local things, that is, monitor the Estonian press, translate the more important items, and the like. I was then 22, just out of prison, and had a job teaching.

"Our first conversation was fairly long. It took place in Hotel Bristol. Litvinov had several telephones on his desk, and a large pile of newspapers and magazines. He received me most affably. Dressed in a plain suit, portly, with lively, kind eyes and a natural manner of speaking, he immediately won my trust.

"I told him about the political situation in Estonia. He asked me a lot of questions, and took down my answers. He wanted to know everything about the country, then gave me some paternal advice. I was intending to leave Estonia. He said I should not.

"At one point, Litvinov wanted the help of another member of the Mission. He picked up the phone, but nobody answered. It was a Saturday. 'They've all gone. Can't be helped,' he said with a kind smile."

The situation was generally difficult. The West refused to recognise the Bolshevik government. At home, the counter-revolution would not lay down its arms. Here and there across the country, it attempted to seize power. The Kronstadt mutiny<sup>53</sup> was being plotted. Kulak risings kept breaking out in the countryside. The republic was tormented by famine and a vicious typhoid epidemic.

The bourgeois government in Estonia terrorised Communists and other progressives. Counter-revolutionaries who had been swept out of Russia by the Red Army, found refuge in the Baltic states and specifically in Estonia. Those who were living in Tallinn hurled threats against Soviet diplomats on the assumption that the local authorities would condone it.



There had been unpleasant incidents. One night, when Litvinov was returning to the mission, his car suddenly came to an abrupt stop and turned round its axis, with all windowpanes smashing. A cable had been stretched across the street. Luckily, there were no serious consequences. But acts of diversion did not stop, and vigilance was on the order of the day. Litvinov was cool. He refused to panic, though he knew his car with the red flag infuriated the enemies of Soviet Russia.

Litvinov's activities in Estonia were of different kinds. Contacts with the business world were maintained chiefly by his assistant, Leonid Stark, scion of a military family, a model old Russian intellectual, a diplomat with broad vision, and a convinced Bolshevik. He did business with local firms, and Litvinov, though occupied with other problems, followed the market closely and jumped at every favourable opportunity to buy and ship desired goods to Soviet Russia. An Estonian scholar, Dmitry Rudnev, who has seen documents related to Litvinov's activities in Tallinn, observed: "Even a far from complete list of telegrams received by Litvinov from Deputy Commissar for Foreign Trade Lezhava and member of the Commissariat's Collegium Voikov and Litvinov's replies give a good idea of the scale on which the Soviet trade mission worked in Estonia."

On January 24, 1921, for example, Lezhava asked Litvinov to speed up the shipment of a steam turbine to Omsk.

On the following day, he asked Litvinov to ship nails to Petrograd, along with implements and equipment for timber felling. He wrote that "any delay will be most sensitively felt by the economy of our republic".

On February 5, Voikov asked Litvinov to speed up delivery of scythes. On February 11, Lezhava sent a request for paper, which Litvinov should buy at Johanson's paper mill in Revel. On February 21, Lezhava asked Litvinov to buy fodder grass seed. Four days later Litvinov was asked to send medical supplies bought in Estonia as quickly as possible. On February 28, Litvinov, in his turn, asked Lezhava to speed up despatch to Tallinn of the 23 locomotives that were to undergo repairs at the Tallinn Repair Works.

On March 7, Litvinov informed Lezhava that he had concluded a contract for 1,500,000 scythes, which would soon be shipped to Russia. On March 16, Litvinov let Lezhava know that he had sent a shipment of butter, and that the Estonian government was willing to sell sugar and rye.

Litvinov was always true to himself: he would buy only if the deal was profitable. He would often write to Lezhava: "The prices are high—I recommend waiting."

On April 7, Litvinov sent Lezhava additional information about a contract for a large lot of potatoes for Soviet Russia. In those days potatoes were, indeed, a major problem—so important, in fact, that the chief of the food train would, upon arriving in Moscow, come personally to Lenin's office to confirm that the freight had arrived safely.

Litvinov had no pity for profiteers, for anyone who tried to sell Soviet Russia sub-standard goods. He annulled contracts, made people pay compensations for breach of contract, and went to court when necessary, refusing to spend a single Soviet kopeck needlessly. Trade with Estonia was fairly large for those times. In the ten months that Litvinov was political and trade representative in Tallinn, some 315,000 tons of various foodstuffs and other freight was shipped from there to Soviet Russia. If transit freights bought by Litvinov in other countries, and shipped home via Estonia, were added, the total would amount to five times as much.

The importance of what Litvinov and his assistants were doing in Tallinn was inestimable. Soviet Russia was so badly in need of all goods that even small shipments were controlled and distributed by the government. On April 19, 1921, for example, along with other important problems, the Council of People's Commissars discussed the needs of Gidrotorf, a major enterprise, and ruled that it would be supplied 150 buckets, 200 knives of different kinds, and some 500 yards of cloth for its kitchens and hostel.

Hundreds of things, big and small, had to be done. And Litvinov did them, for all of them were important, all of them had to be done in time, and to best advantage.

In the spring, an icebreaker from Britain entered Tallinn harbour. It had been ordered by the former Provisional Government, and the British shipyards had built it. It so happened that Litvinov was the purchaser. A few years later, the icebreaker was named after Leonid Krasin.

The ship arrived in Tallinn with a British crew. A Russian captain and crew came from Petrograd to take over. The English invited all concerned to a banquet, and wished the icebreaker good sailing. Litvinov spoke a few words of gratitude to the British seamen. He spoke of the solidarity of workers of all countries. He said Soviet Russia was badly in need of solidarity. If only few people understood the historic role of the socialist state and its proletariat today, he said, a time would come when all nations would see it.

As in the Copenhagen days, Litvinov worked hard to accomplish the aims of his mission. Despite the doings of local reactionaries and their foreign patrons, the Soviet Mission became a centre of Tallinn's

political life. It was connected with the economic and political world of Estonia, and through it with other countries by a thousand threads. Vladimir Shenshev, a former Red Army man who was first secretary of the Soviet Mission in Tallinn, recollected:

"Litvinov won considerable prestige in Tallinn. Calling on members of the government or attending receptions, he looked so dignified that he inspired reverence. No bourgeois diplomat in Tallinn could compare with Litvinov in intelligence, knowledge, and breadth of vision. He was head and shoulders above any other ambassador. This enhanced Soviet Russia's prestige. The staff of our Mission was proud of their chief. Whenever he came back from a stay in Moscow, he would speak before the local Soviet colony on the international situation and the state of affairs at home. We liked his talks. All of us were still young, and learned a lot from him."

In the spring of 1921, Alexander Bogdanov arrived in Tallinn en route from Moscow to Western Europe. A prominent revolutionary in the past, he had known Litvinov well, and had left Saratov secretly in his company to attend the RSDLP Conference in Tammerfors. A trained medical doctor, philosopher, and economist, he had done a lot for the revolution. A Bolshevik from the outset, he had been a member of the Bureau of the Majority Committee along with Litvinov, and then also a member of the Central Committee. During the years of reaction that followed the first Russian revolution, however, he parted ways with Bolshevism and formed a group called Vperyod and became a leader of the otzovists,<sup>54</sup> coming to grips with Lenin.

After the October Revolution, Bogdanov had worked fruitfully in various fields, notably medicine. The last job he had was that of director of the Moscow Blood Transfusion Institute. It was here that he laid down his life, doing a dangerous transfusion experiment on himself.

With lodgings at the Soviet political mission, Bogdanov volunteered to lecture to the staff. A brilliant speaker, he got into the spirit of it and, quite unexpectedly, began recalling the principles of the otzovists, and the activity of his Vperyod group. He lost his bearings, and began careening amidst untenable theoretical potholes.

People listened attentively. Litvinov, too, did not intervene. But when the lecture was over, he approached Bogdanov, and said:

"I must disappoint you, I cannot accept what you've said in the lecture. Will you let me speak?"

Bogdanov was embarrassed. Naturally, he invited Litvinov to make his retort.

What happened thereafter is related by V. Shenshev, who was present:

"As Bogdanov was finishing his lecture, I was urgently called to the phone next door. A comrade shouted that I should hurry back, for Litvinov was speaking.

"Litvinov was virtually wiping the floor with Bogdanov. He exposed Bogdanov's old, anti-Leninist mistakes. His sarcasm was murderous. We listened delightedly to his brilliant and persuasive speech. We knew what Litvinov had been doing underground before the Revolution—all the activities he engaged in at different stages of the revolutionary struggle. That day, however, we saw him in a new light. For us, most of whom were young Communists, it was a splendid school of political infighting."

Clara Zetkin visited the Soviet Mission en route from Berlin to the Third Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. She was received with flowers. Tallinn's entire Soviet colony gathered in the main hall. She spoke about the situation in Germany, and asked many questions herself.

Another prominent visitor to the Soviet Mission was Isadora Duncan. She was also en route to Soviet Russia because she thought that there, in the new society, she would more easily start a ballet school along new principles. She was uncowed by the tales of hunger and terrorism said to be reigning in Russia. Isadora was invited to the mission's dining room, and when she saw people eating soup and stewed beef with potatoes, she exclaimed happily:

"I thought so! All the talk about famine in Russia is a lie!"

People told her it was not a lie. Soviet Russia was still in the grip of hunger.

"That only makes me more determined to go there," she replied.

And she went. She spent four years in Soviet Russia, and was an eminent success.

On holidays, parties and dances were held at the Mission. People sang songs, and everybody had a good time. On one such day, the red flag was torn off the Soviet Mission building. Braving possible potshots by counter-revolutionaries, members of the staff hoisted a new flag at once.

The whiteguards were behaving more and more outrageously. Litvinov did his utmost to keep relations with the Estonian government on an even keel. He was aware of the importance of the Soviet-Estonian accords. But when the whiteguard acts became increasingly provoking, he turned to the Estonian government. On March 21, 1921, in a sharp note, he pointed out that new detachments of whiteguards were being formed in Estonia, and "criminal elements were intending to make Estonia a base for hostile actions against the Russian Republic."

In personal conversations with the Estonian Prime Minister and



Minister of Foreign Affairs, Litvinov warned of possible grave consequences. The Estonian government assured Litvinov that no such military detachments would be allowed in Estonia.

But what is the good of promises if they are not backed up by deeds? During the mutiny in Kronstadt, the whiteguards in Estonia tried to organise a "Russian government". The moment Litvinov learned of it, he got in touch with the Estonian Foreign Ministry. On his insistence, seven whiteguards, the initiators of that anti-Soviet action, were expelled from the country. The bourgeois government had to show it was faithful to the terms of the Tartu Treaty, and agreed to establish telegraph connections with Soviet Russia. This was important, because talks were already underway about telegraph and telephone connections with the Scandinavian countries, which would partly cross Estonia.

Litvinov had seen little of his family since leaving London. Assignments had followed in quick succession—to Stockholm, Christiania, and Copenhagen. Long partings alternated with short reunions. Litvinov was homesick. He longed to see his wife and children. He had gone to Tallinn alone, for there was no telling how long he would stay there. In the spring of 1921, however, he assumed he would stay in Estonia until the end of the year, and summoned his family.

His son was five, his daughter four. Litvinov saw the family at intervals, for most of the time he travelled. Whenever they had a free evening, they would go walking. Litvinov taught his children Russian. His wife, too, was learning Russian. With some difficulty.

Once, seeing a cow, she suggested in Russian:

"That is a cow! But how do I call a cow's husband?"

The Litvinovs' lessons of Russian caused no little merriment among the staff of the mission.

In early May 1921, Litvinov was recalled. On May 10, the Council of People's Commissars had a new appointment for him. Lenin was in the chair. Chicherin's deputy, Lev Karakhan, would go to Warsaw as envoy, and Litvinov would take his place. Litvinov was also put in charge of foreign currency operations. He was to control the Republic's foreign exchange. Lenin told him that, for a while, he would have to do the job in Tallinn as well. Estonia was still one of the outlets in combating the West's economic blockade. Litvinov returned to his post.

The situation in Estonia was tense. The counter-revolutionaries there were highly active. The persecution of Estonian Communists continued. Litvinov did everything he could to save those who had

been sentenced to death or long terms of imprisonment. His diplomatic standing, however, complicated matters. Every demarche in defence of a Communist was qualified by the Estonians as interference in the country's domestic affairs. But Litvinov would not desist. He made the most of the prestige that Soviet Russia had gained by then in various quarters. And he let it be known that Soviet Russia would stand by the persecuted Communists and defend them in every possible way.

By the end of his stay in Estonia (he left in October 1921) Litvinov managed to exchange 167 Estonian Communists for 247 Estonian citizens sentenced to prison terms in Soviet Russia for spying or criminal offences.

As supervisor of foreign exchange operations, Litvinov amassed enormous sums running into hundreds of millions of gold roubles, which were spent on buying machinery, grain, fabrics, and medical supplies—items that were essential in combating the bitter privations in Soviet Russia.

Only those who were involved knew anything about these transactions. One of them was an old Russian railway engineer, Y. V. Lomonosov. He had been picked by the Council of People's Commissars to secure the shipment from Sweden of 1,000 locomotives that Krasin had ordered earlier. The Russian railways were in a sorry state. Freight cars were scattered about the enormous country, standing idle on rusted tracks in sidings. There were no locomotives. Freight could not be transported. And locomotives had to be paid for in gold. It was up to Litvinov to organise the transfer of gold to Sweden.

The operation was carried out in the utmost secrecy. No one knew anything about it, except those whom Litvinov trusted implicitly. And when everything was checked, rechecked, and checked again, the gold packed in cases was put aboard a ship heading for Sweden.

Later, Litvinov shipped gold to France, Switzerland, and other countries. The stream of goods arriving in Soviet Russia increased steadily. Lezhava continued to send telegrams: send nails, send slate, send flour, sacking, medical supplies, scythes, and sickles.

And Litvinov did as he was told. In addition he sent everything he could buy or exchange, for the people of Russia were in dire need of goods.

On April 21, 1928, addressing a session of the Central Executive Committee, Litvinov said:

"In 1921 I was authorised by the Council of People's Commissars to supervise foreign exchange transactions and the sale of Soviet gold abroad. I was in Revel, and several hundred million roubles' worth

of gold passed through my hands. Most of it was sold directly or through various middlemen to large French firms, which shipped the gold either to France or to Switzerland. But in the end, all that gold came to rest in the safes of the Reserve Bank of the United States."

The things Litvinov accomplished in Tallinn at that time could well have become the subject of an engaging adventure story. But it was the grim story of Soviet Russia's fight for economic survival.

In the summer of 1921, Litvinov was summoned to Moscow ever more frequently. The reasons may be found in the minutes of the Council of People's Commissars. On August 23, it examined the transportation and reception of German and Swedish locomotives. On September 13, with Lenin in the chair, it discussed the granting of concessions to certain foreign firms. Litvinov was summoned as member of the Concession Committee. On October 11, the Council of People's Commissars discussed the application of SKF, a Swedish firm, which wanted a concession. And again Litvinov was summoned.

In October 1921, Maxim Litvinov came to Tallinn for the last time. A few days later, the Soviet government announced that his stint in Estonia was over. His place was taken by Alexander Stark.

Litvinov knew that a new job was waiting for him. Probably no easy job. But he did not know that in the several months to come he would take part in the historic battles which Soviet diplomacy mounted in Genoa and the Hague.

## Chapter 5

### IN GENOA AND THE HAGUE

In 1921 Litvinov was appointed Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. Chicherin supervised all Soviet diplomatic activity, and specifically the Eastern and Protocol departments. Litvinov was put in charge of organisation and the European departments. But there was no rigid differentiation. The economic and legal departments, for example, were the responsibility of both Chicherin and Litvinov.

Litvinov also devoted much of his time to the Consular Department, and the Department of Diplomatic Couriers. All correspondence, too, went through his hands. But Litvinov's attention was centred on European affairs. He considered it a top priority to establish diplomatic and economic relations with the European countries. Here he made the most of his long-time and close ties with the European labour movement in his emigré years, having represented his Party on various bodies of the Second International and knowing its leaders, of whom many held high posts in the governments of their countries. He now used his acquaintanceship with Huysmans, Vandervelde, and other Western statesmen, in the interests of Soviet Russia.

Lenin's high opinion of the young Soviet diplomatic service was justified. The Commissariat's Collegium gathered at regular intervals, settling the key foreign-policy issues promptly and to best advantage. Lenin's sagacious guidance was constantly felt. He kept his finger on the pulse of international affairs, and was wont to assist and advise, tactfully but insistently. His involvement helped to cement the staff of young, energetic, devoted, and selfless members of the Foreign Commissariat.

But what about Chicherin and Litvinov? The relationship of two statesmen of their stature is certainly of public interest. It was not until 1921, in effect, that Georgy Chicherin and Maxim Litvinov had really come together as statesmen whom the Party appointed to do one and the same job. They worked hand in hand until 1928, when Chicherin fell ill, went to Germany for treatment, and never again returned to his post.



Their previous contacts had been sporadic. Their meetings in London—at the Herzen Circle, at parties and public debates, and then as members of the Commission for the Repatriation of Russian Emigrés, were of an entirely different nature. Nor should we close our eyes to the fact that the two distinguished Soviet diplomats had also done different things for the Revolution before it began. Chicherin, scion of a wealthy aristocratic family, had a first-class education, but renounced the career of a tsarist diplomat and a place in high society. He was one of the many Russian enlightened progressives who contributed enormously and invaluable to the revolution.

Litvinov's road was different. When the two first met in London, Chicherin was rather more a Menshevik. Litvinov, on the other hand, was secretary of the local Bolshevik group. They differed over methods of struggle and over how the Revolution should develop. Then the imperialist First World War clarified the situation. Chicherin shifted to Bolshevik positions. This was logical, as his devoted service to the Soviet Republic confirmed.

Lenin thought very highly of the two men. It was on his recommendation that they were both assigned to the diplomatic service. Lenin's many letters to Litvinov speak of his trust in him. And here is Lenin's succinct comment on Chicherin in 1918, a time when many people in the Party mistrusted the former nobleman:

"Chicherin is an excellent worker, conscientious, clever, knowledgeable."

People who had worked with both Chicherin and Litvinov for years, have also left behind valuable comments.

Anastas Mikoyan: "Maxim Litvinov was a sharp-witted and resolute man. He was quick on the uptake. I had the privilege of observing his diplomatic career over many years. He was no dogmatist, and had a knack of winning the hearts of Western statesmen. He turned this to good advantage for the Soviet Union. A flexible politician, he manoeuvred skilfully."

Ivan Maisky: "Chicherin was a distinguished personality. He had a far-ranging mind, and a knack for constructing major foreign-policy concepts. Litvinov ... was a man of action, always concentrated on getting something specific from his opposite number—a treaty, a protocol, a convention."

Yevgeny Gnedin (chief of the Commissariat's Press Department): "When Litvinov was appointed People's Commissar in 1930, he called in the press. Seated on the porch of the Commissariat's house of receptions in Spiridonovka Street, he addressed the journalists standing round him. He spoke kindly of his predecessor, whom he described as a distinguished diplomat. Their relationship had, indeed,

always been marked by mutual respect and a sense of principle."

Nikolai Lyubimov (member of the Soviet delegation at the Genoa Conference): "The relationship between Chicherin and Litvinov was always one of tact and mutual respect. Chicherin was People's Commissar and Litvinov was his Deputy, but this did not mean they treated each other as superior and inferior. They considered themselves equal, having learned to respect each other back in London. True, their style was different, but not their political views. They were also different in appearance. Litvinov seemed drier, Chicherin more emotional. But, in fact, this outward impression did not always conform with their inner state. Personal contacts with both of them have led me to conclude that although Chicherin was outwardly warmer, his inner world was probably cooler. Due to his past. Their styles were different, but both were incredibly hard workers. Litvinov's orderly style and the methodical way he went about things, were amazing."

Certainly, there had been arguments between Chicherin and Litvinov, and differences too—over particular points, and over major issues of principle. But both had from the very outset compelled respect for the Soviet Union and Soviet diplomacy by carrying through Lenin's foreign-policy principles.

In 1922, Soviet diplomacy faced the truly titanic job of splitting the anti-Soviet front of imperialist powers. On January 6, the Supreme Council of the Entente powers decided to hold an international economic conference in Genoa. On January 7, the Soviet government received an invitation to take part.

This did not come as a total surprise. The Entente's armed campaign against Soviet Russia had failed. The five-year period of non-recognition, with the resulting absence of economic ties, had done much harm to the European and world economy. Britain was more strongly affected than other countries, for it had always had a brisk trade with Russia. And Prime Minister Lloyd George had, indeed, made sure that the Entente's Supreme Council lifted the blockade of Russia in 1920, whereupon he invited a Soviet delegation to London. No trade agreement was signed, however, because of the Red Army offensive on the Polish front. Britain broke off the talks to exert pressure on the Soviet Republic. When an agreement was finally signed on March 16, 1921, Soviet Russia was thus granted *de facto* recognition.

Other countries followed suit. On May 6, 1921, Germany signed a trade agreement, Norway on September 2, Austria on December 7, Italy on December 26, Sweden on February 1, 1922, and then also Czechoslovakia on June 5.

In September 1921, a conference in Brussels discussed what was termed aid to Russia. Point one of its resolution said the conference favoured aiding the Soviet Republic in combating famine and restoring the economy as a whole. But this was made conditional on wholly unacceptable terms. The resolution said, for example, that extensive aid would follow if the Soviet government accepted responsibility for the Tsar's debts and returned all nationalised foreign property.

The Foreign Commissariat responded with a note on October 28. It ridiculed the capitalist world's attempt to relate aid to the hungry with payment of the Tsar's debts. Since it wanted economic ties with other powers, it said Soviet Russia was prepared to pay some pre-war debts, especially to small holders of stocks and shares.

Small holders were part of the mass of voters and influenced public opinion in the countries concerned. Now, they raised their voice, calling on their governments to come to terms with Soviet Russia as quickly as possible. It was the Soviet note, indeed, that paved the way for the Genoa Conference. The British government had taken the initiative of launching talks with Moscow. Thereupon, came the official invitation to send a Soviet delegation to Genoa. It was most desirable for all the Allied powers, it said, that the Soviet delegation should be headed by Citizen Lenin, whose presence would no doubt help resolve most issues favourably.

News arrived on the same day that Lloyd George had prevailed on his partners to invite vanquished Germany as well. The underlying meaning was clear: Britain wished to counterpose defeated Germany to victorious France which, contrary to British interests, had begun playing the role of hegemon in Europe.

Moscow accepted the invitation to Genoa. Point one of the Entente's resolution promised that no nation would arrogate the right of imposing upon another nation the system of its internal life and manner of government. It said every country had a right to the system it preferred.

This was a good basis for a dialogue.

The Central Executive Committee appointed Lenin leader of the Soviet delegation. Chicherin was picked as his deputy. With the reservation that if Lenin, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, was unable to go to Genoa, Chicherin would have the prerogatives of leader of the delegation. And that was what happened. Though it should be stressed that preparations for the Genoa Conference, the first official international forum at which Soviet diplomacy crossed swords with bourgeois diplomats, proceeded under the guidance and with the participation of Lenin.

On March 27, 1922, in the Central Committee's political report to

the 11th Congress of the Communist Party, Lenin related how the delegation was formed and how its objectives were formulated: "I must say that in the Central Committee we have taken very great pains to appoint a delegation of our best diplomats (we now have a fair number of Soviet diplomats, which was not the case in the early period of the Soviet Republic). The Central Committee has drawn up sufficiently detailed instructions for our diplomats at the Genoa Conference; we spent a long time discussing these instructions and considered and reconsidered them several times."

Lenin had deep trust in collective work. On February 3, 1922, the Party's Political Bureau instructed the top Soviet statesmen and diplomats to put down proposals for the Soviet delegation in Genoa in writing. This also applied to members of the government delegation—Chicherin, Litvinov, Rudzutak,<sup>55</sup> Krasin, Vorovsky, and Joffe.<sup>56</sup>

Litvinov submitted his ideas to the Political Bureau early in February. He made clear that he had withheld his view of the effect the Genoa Conference would have on consolidating Soviet power inside the country or on the working-class movement in Europe. He added, however, that "an agreement based on the resolutions adopted by the Entente powers in Cannes was likely to prepare the ground for de jure recognition of the Soviet Government, though such recognition might not be immediate."

Litvinov described the situations that would follow the various possible outcomes of the conference, set forth the action programme of the Soviet delegation, and submitted proposals.

"Recognition by at least a few countries," he wrote, "would greatly reduce the chances of a spring or summer intervention. If such an intervention were still objectively possible, non-recognition would not help France to extend large aid to Poland, Finland, and Rumania. It is not likely that Britain will grant any considerable aid to Russia, but if the rift between Britain and France widens, aid in small quantities is quite possible."

Hopes of a foreign loan, Litvinov wrote, were delusive. If foreign governments even managed to raise the capital (a paltry sum of 20 million pounds), this would inevitably involve international control and patronage over Russia, and lead to the revival of a single bourgeois front. Recognition, on the other hand, would clear the path for private enterprises. But, Litvinov added, credits would not resolve the current year's food shortages.

If the conference failed, he wrote, this would revive an anti-Russian coalition, retard recognition, and hold up private credits, but not for long. The industrial crisis and unemployment would compel



Sweden, Norway, and other countries to lift the blockade, conclude separate agreements with Soviet Russia, and, if forced to, also recognize it. If the Anglo-French differences continue, Britain would take the same path, and then also Italy.

In any case collapse of the negotiations in Genoa would not be a disaster. Consequently, Litvinov wrote, the delegation must shape its tactics and set the limit of its concessions accordingly, and see to it that the blame for the collapse falls on the other side, timing it to affect the narrow interests of the relatively small group of Russia's creditors.

The delegation, Litvinov suggested, should welcome and unconditionally accept the first point of the Cannes resolution concerning the immunity of the economic and governmental systems established independently by every country. This should be treated as the basis of the Cannes resolution and any possible agreement.

The second point of the resolution should be treated as referring to future deals with Russia. The Soviet government should declare that it will consider capital and property brought by foreigners inviolable. On no account, however, should it agree to denationalise enterprises that had belonged to foreign industrialists. This demand, Litvinov pointed out, was contrary to the Cannes resolution.

The essential condition on which the Soviet Union may recognise any foreign debt would be the Allies' recognition of the Soviet counter-claims.

Since a breakdown was likely at the very beginning of the conference, Litvinov argued, the delegation should at once, if only briefly, set forth its views on all issues, namely, the Soviet refusal to pay outstanding debts, the Soviet withdrawal from the European war, the Soviet counter-claims, and revival of the European economy.

Europe's rehabilitation, Litvinov maintained, was possible only if the sides cancelled all debts and claims, if they concentrated on disarmament, including naval disarmament, and if currencies were stabilised through the redistribution of gold reserves among the European countries and the United States in pre-war proportions through long-term credits. Litvinov recommended partial universal devaluation of paper money in the impoverished countries, and elimination of artificial political barriers (corridors) hindering commercial relations and the commodity turnover. This, Litvinov said, was no communist propaganda, but quite acceptable palliatives in the view of many bourgeois scholars.

Russia, he added, should accept partial disarmament commensurate with the length of its borders and the size of its population, provided other countries did the same.

In addition to Allied compensation for losses incurred through the Civil War and foreign intervention, Russia laid claim to a share of the 132,000 million gold marks which the Allies had obtained under the Versailles Treaty. In proportion to casualties, dead and wounded, Russia should receive 35,000 million gold marks, which it would let the Allies keep in payment of the war debt if other Soviet counter-claims did not balance out that figure. It should be made clear, Litvinov amplified, that this scheme would spare the tormented people of Germany any new burdens.

In the question of reparations, of altering the Versailles, St. Germain, and other French treaties, Litvinov pointed out in conclusion, the delegation should support the neutral countries against the Allies irrespective of any agreement with Germany.

Litvinov concluded his programme in most lucid terms. In all European matters, he wrote, it was oriented on Britain. Entirely logical. Because France, the other major European power, was set upon a rigidly anti-Soviet course, while influential quarters in Britain wanted trade and economic ties with Soviet Russia, and Lloyd George was prepared to establish diplomatic relations with Moscow. Besides, the British working class was vigorously opposed to any intervention in Russia. Litvinov also attached enormous importance to contacts with the war-weary Germans and a possible agreement with Germany. This he made quite clear in his notes. In fact, the Soviet government's essential position on the eve of the conference counted on an international grouping that would include Germany.

Losing no time, Lenin wrote a letter to the members of the Political Bureau on this score: "Perhaps we should start *at once* only personal talks (without any papers) in Berlin and Moscow with the Germans about *contacts* between us and them at Genoa?... Perhaps we should at once suggest secretly to *all* our plenipotentiary representatives to put out feelers with the governments concerned to find out whether or not they are prepared to start *unofficial* secret talks with us on a *preliminary* marking out of the *line* at Genoa?"

Litvinov's note reflects some of the features of his character that had surfaced quite distinctly at the very outset of his revolutionary career. He stuck to principle in his evaluations. He did not shrink in face of difficulties. His judgements showed insight into the most perfidious and cunning designs of the enemy. He anatomised enemy plans. And had boundless faith in the Bolshevik cause, in the future of Soviet Russia. While his proposals relating to finance, set forth in just two dozen lines, would be a credit to any finance minister. Years later, at a most trying time for him, Litvinov evidently had grounds to

think that, perhaps, the government would let him run the country's finances.

At the 11th Congress of the Party, Lenin defined the aims of the Soviet delegation, and did so with the utmost clarity:

"Needless to say, we are going to Genoa not as Communists but as merchants. We must trade, and they must trade. We want the trade to benefit us; they want it to benefit them. The course of the issue will be determined, if only to a small degree, by the skill of our diplomats... We are going to Genoa for the practical purpose of expanding trade and of creating the most favourable conditions for its successful development on the widest scale. But we cannot guarantee the success of the Genoa Conference. It would be ridiculous and absurd to give any guarantees on that score. I must say, however, that weighing the present possibilities of Genoa in the most sober and cautious manner, I think that it will not be an exaggeration to say that we shall achieve our objective. Through Genoa, if the other parties to the negotiations are sufficiently shrewd and not too stubborn; by-passing Genoa if they take it into their heads to be stubborn. But we shall achieve our goal!"

The Soviet delegation, including its technical staff, had been picked some time before the 11th Congress of the Party. But there could be no question of Lenin's going to Genoa. Resolutions of workers' meetings and telegrams from all over the country reached the Party's Central Committee and the government. People feared for Lenin's life and objected categorically to his going abroad.

It seemed for a while that Chicherin, too, would not be able to go. The strain he had been under in recent months led to a serious illness. On January 16, Lenin circulated among members of the Political Bureau Chicherin's letter on the situation at the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. He wanted the best doctors to examine Chicherin and decide whether a vacation could be put off until after the conference or Chicherin should have it at once. Lenin wanted to know if Chicherin would bear the tense preparations for the conference. He wondered who would take charge at the Commissariat in Chicherin's absence. "Special responsibility," Lenin wrote, "must be placed on someone (perhaps Litvinov + Vorovsky + Joffe + P. P. Gorbunov?) for seeing that when Chicherin and the whole delegation leave for Genoa, *all* the Foreign Commissariat's affairs are handed over to *specified* persons in *complete* order."

As Lenin suggested, substitutes were appointed in the event of Chicherin's illness or if he should leave Genoa before the conference ended. Lenin suggested two trios: Litvinov + Krasnov + Christian Rakovsky or Litvinov + Joffe + Vorovsky.

On January 27, 1922, a special session of the Central Executive Committee appointed representatives of the Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and other republics, to the delegation. Nariman Narimanov, Alexander Bekzadian, and Budu Mdivani represented the Caucasian republics, and Christian Rakovsky the Ukraine. The Genoa Conference was thus the first international forum attended by delegates of Soviet national republics.

The period before the delegation's departure was filled to overcrowding with various urgent business. Chicherin, Litvinov, Krasin, Vorovsky, and Rudzutak checked and rechecked the Soviet position. Lenin, who was then staying in the country near Moscow, sent note after note to Chicherin and Litvinov, giving advice and issuing instructions.

He called attention to the need for extensive publicity of the preparations for the Genoa Conference in the press, and wanted Chicherin and Litvinov to contact the editors of *Pravda*, *Izvestia*, and other central papers, to outline the subject matter, and pick writers of future articles. On January 26, Lenin's suggestion to that effect was backed up by a Political Bureau decision, and soon Litvinov's little room at the Foreign Commissariat turned into an editorial office of the Moscow papers. That was when Litvinov displayed qualities which Moscow editors and journalists appreciated so deeply. He did not impose his ideas. He merely elucidated the matter at hand and asked them to set forth the chief thought to the country's best advantage. As for the rest, he left everything to their discretion.

All organising related to Genoa was Litvinov's responsibility. Boris Stein was appointed secretary of the delegation. Nikolai Lyubimov recalled that Litvinov hand-picked experts, consultants, advisers, and the technical personnel. He did things methodically, giving every point deep consideration, and never revised earlier decisions.

Something that happened at the time weighed heavily on Litvinov's conscience in years to come. Shortly before the delegation's departure for Genoa, Lenin asked him to put Inessa Armand's<sup>57</sup> daughter on the technical staff. The young girl was undernourished, and Lenin, who highly esteemed her mother (she died of cholera in Nalchik) was eager to help. But the technical personnel had already been picked. Litvinov said as much to Lenin, and Lenin did not insist.

"Well, nothing is to be done, if there's no vacancy," he said.

Litvinov could not forgive himself for not having done what Lenin asked. He said as much many times to his family and friends.

Chicherin's health improved a little, and he took part in the preparations for the conference, drawing up projects, weighing alternative



situations with the rest of the delegation, and maintaining continuous contact with Lenin.

Boris Stein recollected that the delegation met three times a week, with Chicherin reading aloud notes, instructions, and scenarios sent by Lenin. "Lenin, brilliant strategist that he was," Stein said, "told us how we should behave in various situations, and suggested tactical moves to further our main objectives."

The main objectives were to break through the single front that had shaped against Soviet Russia at the London conference of experts in March 1922. Lenin posed dozens of questions and considered all kinds of situations. "Like a chess player," Stein observed, "he weighed his own moves and those of the adversary, and suggested how to counter anything the adversary may undertake. It was a diplomatic school for us—those notes and recommendations of Lenin's."

In the several weeks before the delegation's departure, the Foreign Commissariat staff knew neither rest nor sleep. A special commission had been set up to calculate the losses suffered by Soviet Russia from the armed intervention of the Entente countries. Information was collected from all parts of the country. Litvinov had a large metal case in his office where this information was kept. One of the experts, Nikolai Lyubimov, was directly responsible for calculating the losses. Litvinov let him have his office, and moved into another little room.

The world press, notably the European papers, printed hundreds of articles about the coming conference with the Bolsheviks. One ludicrous story followed another. One set of conjectures totally repudiated others. Not only the yellow press but also reputable bourgeois papers reported that the Bolsheviks would wear red shirts and black waistbands, boots, and tall fur hats.

True, a few Soviet journalists, notably Lev Sosnovsky, went to Genoa wearing Russian blouses, thinking they were thus "throwing down the challenge to capitalism". But all the rest wore European clothes.

To be sure, it had not been easy to equip the delegation. It consisted of 63 people, and all of them needed clothes. Here is the story of the delegation's cipher clerk, Nikolai Klimenkov: "We were all poorly dressed. None of us had anything to wear. Some decent cloth was unearthed and the Commissariat's tailor, Zhoukevich, had his hands full making suits for us. Chicherin had a tail-coat made. So did Krasin."

As for Litvinov, he was not too well equipped, it appears. Years later, in the autumn of 1941, when he came to Washington as Soviet Ambassador, Emery Kellon recalled in *This Week* that when he had seen Litvinov first—at the Genoa Conference—he had been among

the most poorly dressed: he wore an ill-fitting old suit.

On March 27, the Soviet delegation left for Genoa. It travelled in two railway cars, and there was no difference between superiors and subordinates. The technical personnel ate the same fare as Chicherin, Litvinov, Krasin, and the others.

On the way, the Soviet delegation had two stop-overs—one in Riga, the other in Berlin. Representatives of Poland and Estonia also came to the Latvian capital. Out of fear of the Entente, the Baltic states accepted the Soviet proposal for a conference to work out common tactics in Genoa (which, to be sure, did not prevent them from doing the bidding of the French).

In Berlin, in four days of discussion, Chicherin, Litvinov, and Krasin represented the Soviet side. Germany wanted a rapprochement with Soviet Russia. Vanquished in the world war, handcuffed by the Versailles Treaty, the country was gripped by inflation and unemployment. Its economic ties with the outside world were disrupted. It had always needed Russian raw materials and other goods, its market had looked East for years.

On May 6, 1921, a commercial and political agreement was signed by the Russian Federation and Germany in Berlin. Further rapprochement would enable Germany to fight for equality in the postwar system of European states. Chancellor Joseph Wirth was aware of the importance of closer relations with Moscow. Foreign Minister Rathenau, on the other hand, who played a big part in shaping German policy, was (as a major industrialist) closely connected with the industrial concerns, and cast about for contacts with the West, especially France. He feared that any agreement with the Bolsheviks would create a rift.

In those four days it seemed, however, that a treaty with Germany would be signed in the end. When its text was ready and the German statesmen were about to affix their signatures, Rathenau suddenly declared it was a Saturday, the ministers were out of town, and he was unable to summon them. He had no inkling that the situation would change radically in a few days, and his country would be glad to sign the historic Treaty of Rapallo with Soviet Russia.

That April Saturday, the Soviet diplomats, however, left Berlin empty-handed. Litvinov joked that he had lived through worse times in the German capital, locked up in a Berlin prison. Chicherin, too, had seen the inside of a prison in Berlin in 1906. Krasin's recollections were less sombre: following his illicit escape from Russia to Germany, he had a job as a leading Siemens-Schuckert expert.

The Soviet delegation left Berlin on a glorious spring day. The grass was turning green. The train raced across South Germany, then

through Austria. The delegation arrived in Genoa on April 6 and settled in Santa Margherita, a winter health resort. It was assigned one of the finest hotels, the Palazzo Imperiale. This time, Litvinov did not object to the high cost, but made up for it on other items.

Boris Stein recalled the highlights of April 10, the opening day of the conference:

"The conference opened in San Giorgio, an old palace of the Italian Renaissance. Delegates, experts, and secretaries were seated in the hall. Journalists and those lucky few who had admission tickets, were in the gallery. The hall was buzzing with excitement. It was like a beehive. All the delegations had already taken their seats. Then the most distant door opened. The first to enter was Chicherin, and on his heels came the other members of the Soviet delegation. The buzzing stopped at once. A deep silence fell. All you could hear was the clicking of cameras. The photographers were busy taking pictures of the Soviet delegation. They became aware that we were all dressed like everybody else. Gradually, the excitement subsided, and the conference began."

How it went off is past history. Luigi Facta, the Italian Prime Minister, was elected to the chair. When the French Foreign Minister, Louis Barthou, had had his say (in those days, he was one of the chief organisers of anti-Soviet campaigns in Europe), Joseph Wirth, the German Chancellor, took the floor. The French Foreign Minister had been loudly applauded. In Wirth's case the applause was thinner. Thereupon, Chicherin spoke. He delivered his speech in French, then repeated it in immaculate English so that Lloyd George should hear it at first hand, without an interpreter.

Reporting on the first day of the conference, Richard Washburn Child, United States Ambassador to Italy, informed the State Department that no stirring speeches were made at the opening session of the Genoa Conference, save that of Chicherin. In his forceful speech he set forth everything Soviet Russia could offer the world; also, he called for disarmament.

*L'Humanite's* description of the first day of the conference was nothing less than sarcastic: "The Boches, to whom war-prisoner rules were not applied, entered the hall. Then came the Bolsheviks; not on all fours with a rope around their necks... Wirth, of course, had the appearance of a beaten dog... He was tactful enough not to accept Facta's magnanimous statement that there were no victors or losers any more. Chicherin spoke mildly—well-meaning one minute, a little sarcastic the next. He did not conceal his resolve, promised nothing at all, even said that the West was bluffing. This was too much. Barthou was spoiling for a fight. He wanted his little triumph at any

cost, and suddenly erupted. Since no one had been sworn in before entering, he demanded everybody should be sworn in before leaving. With hands on their swords, and the Bolsheviks with theirs on their knives, they would swear they'd rather die than go against the Cannes resolutions—as conceived by M. Poincare. A touching sight. Alas, the eloquent provocation of our top delegate was greeted by an even more eloquent silence. The general embarrassment increased. It looked as though matters would culminate in a scandal. The host, who wanted to end the day peacefully, hastened to say that the very fact of everybody's presence was proof enough of the general accord."

Sittings, negotiations, and meetings followed in quick succession from the 10th to the 16th of April. One after another, the Soviet delegation repudiated the inventions of the reactionary press, which maintained that the Bolsheviks had come for one purpose only: to conduct propaganda. Chicherin tore this charge to shreds. He explained that Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries had the same idea about the future of the world. He said the Soviet delegation had come to establish relations with commercial and industrial quarters in all countries. If its terms were accepted, he added, contacts would be wholly possible. It became clear at once, that Soviet Russia would not pay the tsarist debts out of hand, that it would do so only if this should be compensated by credits for its economic rehabilitation.

Chicherin demanded that the Soviet counter-claims should be recognised. He demanded peace along the Soviet borders, and *de jure* recognition of the Soviet Government. To top this, he made the proposal for universal disarmament and peaceful coexistence. This flowed directly from the letter he had sent to the Party's Central Committee on March 10, 1922, concerning preparations for the Genoa Conference. On Lenin's instructions, he had expounded what he described as a pacifist programme which he would set forth in Genoa. This was not easy for Chicherin to do: he had opposed pacifism all his life. To speak in its favour went against his grain. But Lenin had asked him to do so, and he did it brilliantly. On the margin of his letter, Lenin put down his comments: "Hear, hear" and "Correct", and underlined some of the phrases.

The disarmament programme that Chicherin made public in Genoa elicited a worldwide response that did Soviet Russia a world of good.

The Soviet programme in Genoa was built on the ideas of Lenin and the Central Committee. Much of what Litvinov had suggested, was taken into account. Boris Stein put down what he described as its unassailable principles:



1) A realistic assessment of the two possible results of Genoa (agreement with the capitalist camp or failure of the conference) was given by Litvinov in his notes in a Leninist spirit, and totally agreed with Lenin's ideas about the prospects of the Genoa Conference and the limit of the concessions the Soviet delegation could make, as expressed in his public speech of March 1922.

2) The tactic worked out by Chicherin, Litvinov, Krasin, and Rudzutak, as approved by the Central Committee (and Lenin), was faithfully followed by the Soviet delegation at different stages of the conference. The approval concerned the concrete documents in which the delegation formulated its commercial proposals. The first such document was the Memorandum of April 20, 1922, which was handed to the Entente delegations in reply to the London report of experts. It said Soviet Russia refused to discuss the Allied terms, which were incompatible with the dignity and sovereignty of the Soviet Republic, and put an end to attempts to consider the Soviet Republic a defeated country.

By the end of the first week it was quite clear that the conference could not succeed. But this was not a setback for Soviet Russia. Lloyd George, who was among the more farsighted bourgeois statesmen, wished to arrange for trade with Russia, and sought contacts with the Soviet delegation. On April 14 and 15, at Villa Albertis, he arranged for British, French, Italian, and Belgian leaders to meet Chicherin, Litvinov, and Krasin. The conversation revolved round the war debt and the counter-claims of the Soviet Republic.

Nikolai Lyubimov, who attended as expert, wrote in his remembrances:

"I memorised the discussion at Villa Albertis in every detail. Specifically, because it was I who had drawn up the counter-claims to the Entente countries for damage inflicted by the intervention of 1918-20. I drew them up on Chicherin's instructions, which he had received directly from Lenin. The sum of our counter-claims for the intervention and blockade, when Litvinov named it, was hypocritically described by Lloyd George as 'absolutely incredible'. In his retort, Chicherin stressed that the Entente governments were wholly responsible for the enormous damage inflicted by the foreign incursion and blockade.

"When we met in the afternoon of April 15, Lloyd George rejected the Soviet counter-claims, and refused to reduce the debt and claims to the Soviet Government... By repulsing the assault of the Entente diplomats at Villa Albertis, the Soviet delegation delivered a crushing and unexpected blow to their plans."

Now the Soviet delegation could tackle its second objective. As

Lenin had said at the 11th Congress of the Party, "Through Genoa, if other parties to the negotiations are sufficiently shrewd and not too stubborn; by-passing Genoa if they take it into their heads to be stubborn. But we shall achieve our goal!"

It would have to be "by-passing Genoa". This was clear. In Rapallo, not too far distant from Genoa, the Soviet diplomats signed a treaty with Germany. The enemies of Soviet Russia were infuriated. But they were also taken aback. Russia now had direct diplomatic relations with Germany, and both sides renounced whatever claims they had to each other.

The events that preceded Easter Sunday on April 16, when the Rapallo Treaty was signed, developed at an indescribably hot pace. Seeing that the West, first of all France, was refusing to recognize Soviet Russia, that it insisted on the return of nationalised enterprises and was devising a programme for Russia's economic and political subjugation, the Soviet diplomats sought a rapprochement with Germany. They had noticed that the Allies treated defeated Germany and its diplomats with scorn, and that not only France but also, in substance, the other Western delegations were driving it into a corner. They had noticed, too, Lloyd George's wish to counterpose Germany and France and that he would probably, therefore, overlook Russia's rapprochement with its major Western neighbour. Backed up by Lenin's ideas, the Soviet diplomats—Chicherin, Litvinov, Krasin, Rudzutak, and Vorovsky—acted with the speed and precision of a boxer in the ring, showing flexibility and the requisite prudence and caution.

George Kennan, U.S. historian and former ambassador to Moscow, wrote in his book, *Russia and the West*, that during the first week of the conference, Walter Rathenau and Joseph Wirth had thrice asked to be received by Lloyd George, but were turned down contrary to all rules of diplomatic courtesy. On Good Friday, Gannini, Secretary of Italian Foreign Minister Siantser, told the Germans that the talks at Villa Albertis were proceeding well and an agreement would soon be reached.

On Saturday, April 15, rumours of an agreement between the British and French, on the one hand, and the Russians, on the other, grew stronger still. The Germans felt themselves left out in the cold. All evening they sat morosely in the lobby of their hotel, and went to bed dispirited and worn out.

But during the night, a representative of the Soviet delegation called up.

Alexander Ehrlich, who was present, recalled: "Around two in the morning I was asked to unlock the reception room where we had the

telephone. Alexander Sabanin, chief of the Foreign Commissariat's economic-legal department, called the German delegation and asked Maltzan to come to the phone. The conversation was short. It lasted no more than three minutes. Sabanin requested Maltzan to tell Chancellor Joseph Wirth that Chicherin would be happy to receive the German delegation at the Palazzo Imperiale in Santa Margherita at 11.00 a.m. to continue negotiations of a Soviet-German agreement begun on April 4, 1922, in Berlin."

Diverse evidence is at hand of what had happened at the German residence after Sabanin's call. Details differ, but the substance is the same: Wirth, Rathenau, Maltzan, and the other German delegates held a stormy conference. Not all members of the German delegation wanted to accept the Soviet invitation. Rathenau least of all. But in the end, they decided to go to the Palazzo Imperiale, and continue the talks that had begun in Berlin.

Let Ehrlich continue his tale: "Rathenau, Hilferding, Maltzan, and von Simson arrived at the door of our hotel at 11 a.m. on April 16. The German diplomats looked weary. They were grey in the face, their eyes were inflamed, and their appearance spoke of tension and fatigue. It was the obvious result of their night-time 'pyjamas' conference. I led them to the lounge, where the talks would proceed. Then I let Chicherin and the other government delegates know that the Germans had come. The negotiations took no more than two hours. Thereupon, the German delegation retired to its hotel, while a few German technicians stayed on to help draw up the final text of the treaty. Two hours later, the German diplomats returned, and in about another hour the treaty was signed."

On the following day, April 17, 1922, Litvinov cabled Moscow: "Our semi-private negotiations with the Supreme Council had alarmed the Germans, and Rathenau came running yesterday more dead than alive, and offered us to sign the agreement he had rejected when we were passing through Berlin."

The signing of the Rapallo Treaty stunned the world. The newspapers said it had the effect of a bursting bomb. Western newspaper commentators shouted the Russians had tricked the Allies. The German bourgeoisie split in two: some were indignant, others saw the Rapallo Treaty as a step towards peace and Germany's economic recovery. Official German quarters declared that the Russo-German accord was favourable not only for both countries, but also showed the conference the right way of settling disputes with Russia and securing universal peace.

Many years later, former Chancellor Wirth would say: "Unfortunately, Germany departed from the road we had taken in Rapallo.

This led to disaster for the German people. History showed with deadly logic that friendship and cooperation with Russia was vitally necessary for the Germans."\*

That was a victory "outside Genoa". The single front of capitalist states was disrupted. Soviet diplomacy had secured Soviet Russia's emergence in the world arena.

The 1922 breakthrough was achieved by diplomats of the Lenin school. Guided by Lenin's genius at all stages, in preparation for Genoa and during the conference itself, they had worked for their goal with admirable resolution.

For Chicherin as leader of the delegation, and for Litvinov as his deputy, the Genoa Conference had been a most important milestone and a most trying test. It brought out Chicherin's diplomatic talents. Litvinov, too, along with the other Soviet diplomats, played an outstanding role.

Here is the evidence of Nikolai Lyubimov:

"Litvinov handled the main organisational work of the Soviet delegation as concerned policy and diplomacy. He supervised the work of the experts. He took part in a number of conference committees, where he spoke on crucial political and economic issues... Revolutionary work during his emigré years in Britain and his activity as a Soviet diplomat prior to Genoa raised his prestige not only among members and staff of the Soviet delegation, but also among Western delegates."

Certainly, Litvinov was faithful to his habits and principles in matters big and small. He was in charge of the delegation's finances, and as in Copenhagen, did not allow uncalled-for expenses. Not even members of the government delegation, to say nothing of the staff, could do anything about it. Ilya Levin, who was Chicherin's secretary, doubled as treasurer, and issued liras and other currency strictly by Litvinov's orders. When hard-pressed, he would say, "Go see Litvinov." Litvinov would be sure to reply, "No extra expenses." One day, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Alexander Bekzadian, said to him: "My dear Maxim, don't be so hard on us. Look around—at the sun, the sea, and all the beauty. The soul yearns for a little merriment. Why not shell out a little, dear Maxim."

"No," Litvinov said.

Bekzadian complained to Chicherin. Chicherin sighed, "I can't help you. You know perfectly well who had authorised Litvinov and what orders were given."

\* From my conversation with ex-Chancellor Wirth in 1954.—*Author*.



Many years later, Bekzadian humorously related this episode to a circle of friends.

On May 19, after the concluding session of the Genoa Conference, the bulk of the Soviet delegation left for Moscow. Everybody was in high spirits. The diplomats were taking home excellent results.

But for Litvinov international negotiations were not over. A new conference, that would probably discuss matters not settled in Genoa was to open in the Hague six weeks later.

The Soviet government knew, of course, that there was little hope in coming to terms with the West on economic issues. But Lenin was sure it was useful to continue the dialogue. At the end of May, he cabled Chicherin in Genoa: "The best thing for us is another conference in three months or so." That would give Soviet Russia a chance to come to grips with the question of debts and private property, and to offer foreign firms concessions on profitable terms for Soviet Russia.

The foreign intervention was over, but the imperialists had not given up their intention of organising a new campaign against Soviet Russia. In June 1922, members of Konsul, a German fascist organisation, assassinated Walter Rathenau, the man who had signed the Rapallo Treaty. Anti-Soviet sentiment ran high all over Germany.

In Russia, too, the situation was uneasy. True, the Soviet government had proved its viability and constructive powers in the previous four-and-a-half years. The New Economic Policy, Lenin's brainchild, was being launched. A good harvest was in the offing for the first time in years. But it was impossible to remedy all the ills caused by the World War, the Civil War, the intervention, and the dislocation, in so short a time. Thousands of people were still dying of hunger in the Volga lands and the Urals. Thousands of homeless were still roaming the roads. Bandit gangs were still on the rampage. The Party concealed none of the problems from the people. It had faith in the nation's common sense and wisdom. Difficulties were bravely combated, with success on the home front paving the way for success in the world arena.

In mid-June 1922, the line-up of the Soviet government delegation to the Hague Conference was announced in Moscow. Litvinov was appointed leader of the delegation. Its members were Christian Rakovsky, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukraine, Leonid Krasin, People's Commissar for Foreign Trade, Nikolai Krestinsky, envoy of the Russian Federation in Germany, and Grigory Sokolnikov, Deputy People's Commissar for Finance, with Boris Stein as the delegation's secretary-general.

Litvinov was made leader on Lenin's suggestion, and Lenin signed

the appointment. In spite of the fact that shortly before this an incident had occurred in Genoa that greatly annoyed Lenin. Krasin had argued that since it was impossible to obtain the desired foreign loan any other way, serious concessions should be made as concerned confiscated foreign property. Learning of this, Moscow feared Chicherin and Litvinov would make concessions not envisaged in the Central Committee directives. On May 2, Lenin drafted a cable to Chicherin: "Highly regretful that Chicherin and partly Litvinov have fallen for Krasin's *foolishness*." The Central Committee categorically demanded that the directive should be strictly abided by.

In subsequent negotiations, Chicherin and Litvinov followed the Central Committee's instructions to the letter. Their activity, like that of the rest of the delegation, was commended. So, when a leader was being picked for the Hague Conference, where the same question of confiscated private property would be at issue, Lenin suggested that Litvinov head the delegation, of which Krasin should be one of the members.

Before leaving for the Hague, Litvinov gave an interview to *Izvestia*. "The Hague Conference," he said, "is a continuation of Genoa. It will pick up where Genoa left off. To go back to the points of departure of the Genoa talks, as France wishes, would be work that leads to nowhere. Though no final agreement was reached in Genoa, we did come to an understanding with our adversaries on some points, though conditionally."

Litvinov was aware, of course, that his interview would be closely examined by his opposite numbers. So he crossed all the t's and dotted all the i's. There could be no question of returning private property. The Soviet Republic would grant concessions, but only if they worked in its interests. Credits were badly needed. But the Russian proletariat would *not* accept slavery as the price. Litvinov ended the interview as follows:

"In any case, the delegation is leaving for the Hague with the same resolve as in Genoa to defend the gains of the revolution, the sovereignty of the worker-peasant government, and the interests of the working people. Russia and the Soviet Government are gaining strength. We could certainly use credits, which would speed up Russia's economic recovery. But we'll survive without credits if there is no way of getting them without relinquishing our sovereignty or paying exorbitant interest."

The Soviet delegation left Moscow for the Hague on June 19. Krasin, who was chairing a conference of foreign trade officials in Moscow, left a little later. In Berlin, the delegation was joined by Krestinsky.

The other side had also been busy preparing. The Western powers tried to work out a joint approach. Ten days before the Hague Conference opened, representatives of the capitalist countries resolved to make Russia return nationalised foreign property. They worked out special tactics. Sittings held jointly with the Soviet delegation would be called sittings of the Russian Commission. Sittings of Western delegations alone would be called "non-Russian".

It was clear from the line-up of the delegations that the Western business world was determined to fight to the finish for the return of its capital in Russia. Belgium, for example, was represented by Catier, a bank director who had had enormous interests in Russia. Britain was represented by Leslie Urquhart, formerly chairman of the board of directors of the Russian-Asiatic Bank and owner of the Lena Goldmines in Siberia. Though the British delegation was headed by Philip Lloyd-Greame, President of the Board of Trade, Urquhart was cock of the roost. The other Western delegations were picked on the same principle. Shell Oil was also strongly represented.

On June 26, the Soviet diplomats arrived in the Hague. On that day, Litvinov took a step that won him the sympathies of the press corps. The Western delegations had been stolidly refusing all information. Litvinov, on the other hand, called a press conference. It was attended by 60 journalists from Europe and America.

The public relations team of the Soviet delegation cabled Moscow the contents of Litvinov's press conference, and two days later it appeared in *Pravda*.

"The journalists," the *Pravda* reported, "showed a strong interest in Litvinov's statement. He denied the rumours of any change in Soviet foreign and home policy, and so on. He stressed that Soviet Russia's policy in relation to the West was the same as in Genoa, but that unlike Genoa, the Russian delegation considered the conference a business conference chiefly on the question of credits.

"Replying to questions, Litvinov spoke of the outlook for the harvest, and of the trial of Socialist-Revolutionaries. The clarity of Litvinov's statements are said to have created a good impression. As in Genoa, the Russian delegation in the Hague is likely to be at the centre of attention."

In the Hague the capitalist world tried again to secure what it had failed to secure in Genoa, though the more long-sighted diplomats knew the attempt was futile. A private property subcommittee gathered on June 29. Lloyd-Greame was in the chair. On his side of the table sat the French, Italian, and Belgian delegates, on the other side sat Litvinov, Krasin, and Krestinsky.

One delegate proposed discussing the question of returning enter-

prises and property to their former owners. Impatiently, he asked Litvinov on what terms a factory owner would be able to re-start his enterprise. He said "owner", not "former owner". Sir Lloyd-Greame, who regained his common sense for a moment, said it was probably premature to discuss terms on which to resume operation before factory owners were restored in their rights.

Litvinov did not even reply. The question of private property was clear. The Soviet people had nationalised factories and mines. And nationalised they would remain. Granting concessions was a different story. Litvinov said, "I want to point out that leasing certain enterprises to private parties is not the chief concern of the Russian government. The Russian government does not care whether these enterprises once belonged to private persons, to the state, or to some organisation. It is guided exclusively by the interests of the Russian Republic." He wanted this to be clear, he said, so as to avoid misunderstanding.

Lloyd-Greame pretended not to understand. He said repeatedly he hoped private property would be returned to its owners. Yes, he knew the Soviet diplomats had made matters quite clear in Genoa, but all the same...

The Belgian representative intervened. Litvinov, he said, had pulled no punches and said the Soviet government did not intend to restore property rights. Was this so? Quite, Litvinov replied.

Committees and subcommittees succeeded each other day after day. Gradually, it sank in that the Soviet people would not return nationalised property. At this point, the Soviet delegation announced that Soviet Russia was prepared to grant concessions to foreign capital. The project had been examined in Moscow before the delegation's departure to the Hague. It was decided to offer capitalist Europe oil, coal, railway, and a few other concessions. Saying this, Litvinov repeated that the main condition was that the concessions should be beneficial for Soviet Russia.

Asked what enterprises were up for consideration, the Soviet delegation pulled out a typed list. Here is how Boris Stein described the reaction:

"When we handed them the list, a commotion broke out. We remembered the story of a trained monkey at the court of a Greek king. One day, when the monkey was dancing, a handful of nuts was flung in its direction. The monkey forgot everything on earth and began picking up the nuts. It was a monkey again. The scene at the conference when the Soviet delegation distributed the list of concessions was much the same. The diplomats snatched up the list and looked frantically for their former enterprises. But they did not see what they want-



ed to see. Urquhart's possessions, for example, had been divided into three different projects, each of them in a different sector of industry. This started a real scramble."

That was not the end of it. Krasin delivered a public lecture on why private property would never be restored in Soviet Russia. The lecture lasted 40 minutes and created an enormous impression. Krasin and Litvinov made it explicitly clear that, if desired, concessions would be granted—but on terms profitable to Soviet Russia. Leslie Urquhart was in a fury. He tabled a resolution saying no capitalist should ever seek a concession in Soviet Russia until confiscated property was restored to its owners. There could be no question of credits, he added.

In Genoa, the Soviet diplomats had asked for government loans. In the Hague, on Lenin's instructions, Litvinov put the matter differently. He suggested that industrialists should grant Soviet Russia commodity credits guaranteed by their governments.

The U.S. administration, which feared that some delegation at the conference might come to terms with Russia, followed the Soviet diplomatic moves with some anxiety. On July 15, the U.S. ambassador in the Hague warned the Western delegates that the United States would not tolerate any agreement with Russia.

On July 18, when it was quite clear that credits would not be forthcoming, Litvinov wrote a letter to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. "Given the personalities on the foreign delegations, especially the British," he wrote, "and with the French and Belgians obviously determined to scuttle the conference, it is hard to expect results. The deeper reason is the German problem, which has suddenly grown to disastrous proportions and captured the British government's total attention. To settle that problem, Lloyd George will have to move closer to France for a time, and, as before in such cases, his prime bargaining chip is the Russian question."

Though it was clear that he would get no credits, nor resolve the other issues, Litvinov was in no hurry to slam the door. He laid a gangplank into the future, as it were, by suggesting to pick up the dialogue later. At the July 19 sitting, he took the floor and summed up what had been accomplished. Soviet Russia, he said, was prepared to make some concessions if the Western powers would grant credits. But they had said credits would not be given. This wrecked the basis for the talks laid in Genoa.

On July 22, *Pravda* wrote: "Litvinov's speech had unmasked the Allies who wanted to skin us alive... The Soviet delegation did well to show which of the two sides was against peace between Soviet Russia and the capitalist countries. This will help us expose the predaceous

policy of restoring the Russian and world economy at the expense of the Russian workers and peasants."

The public at home followed the infighting of the Soviet diplomats in the Hague. On July 23, the *Pravda* ran poet Demyan Bedny's fable, "The Entente Fox and the Soviet Crane", on its front page. It commented on the situation in the Hague:

*Glory and praise to Litvinov,  
Who's as smart as they come.  
They're all out to trick him,  
But he's making things bum...*

*The Soviet crane's a cautious kind,  
Fortbricht and truthful (why tell lies?).  
To the sly fox it speaks its mind,  
And seeks no intimate ties.*

*In case of mutual courtesy, however,  
It wouldn't say no to trade...  
etc.*

After Urquhart's resolution was adopted, the Hague Conference had in fact closed. Capitalist Europe had granted no credits. Soviet Russia had recognised no debts. It refused to return factories to their former owners. On the face of it, no progress. In fact, however, the Hague Conference, like the one in Genoa, was a victory for Soviet Russia and its diplomats. The capitalist world saw that it would never retrieve nationalised property in Russia. It saw there was only one mutually beneficial solution: peaceful coexistence with Socialist Russia. The more sober-minded Western politicians recognised this. The British weekly, *Observer*, wrote that Russia and the Western powers could both wait, but that in the long run they would have to remove the existing differences. Western insistence on abstract justice, the paper said, would some day bow to the more important imperative of resuming relations with Russia.

Prior to their departure from the Hague, Litvinov, Krasin and Krestinsky sent a detailed report to the Council of People's Commissars. "The Russian delegation," they wrote, "noted two different stages in the negotiations. In the first, the Russian delegation supplied information asked for by the Non-Russian Commission. Things proceeded quietly, in workmanlike fashion, without complications. In the second, when the parties discussed mutual proposals and demands, the distinctive interest of particular members of the Non-Russian Com-

mission came to the surface. That was when pressure was applied, with the obvious aim of wrecking the conference. It was clear that some members of the Non-Russian Commission, those who, in Genoa, had objected to the idea of a Hague Conference the strongest, who had tried to prevent the conference from taking place in the interim between Genoa and the Hague, who are the most interested in prolonging the financial and economic blockade of Russia, and who are the main obstacle to Europe's economic recovery, were eager to end the conference as quickly as possible. They feared that if it continued, the anti-Russian front would fall apart. And they succeeded in closing the conference prematurely, before it accomplished its objectives. But the Russian delegation is firmly convinced that in the near future these objectives will be accomplished by other, no less, if not more, suitable means for Soviet Russia."

Further developments showed that the Soviet policy was correct. Six weeks after the Hague Conference, Leslie Urquhart, author of the resolution that would forbid dealing with the Bolsheviks, tried to obtain a concession on the Lena and at the Kyshtim mines. The Council of People's Commissars turned down Urquhart's overture which, as Lenin pointed out, was economically unprofitable for Soviet Russia. Concessions were granted to other firms. Economic relations with the West got off to a start.

On July 25, 1922, the Soviet delegation left the Hague. It arrived in the German capital on the same day. Litvinov decided to stop over in Berlin and hold a press conference for foreign journalists.

The choice of Berlin for this purpose was shrewd. Before the Rapallo Treaty was signed, Ksenia Alexandrovna, sister of the last Russian Emperor Nicholas II, started court proceedings against the German government, stating that the building of the former tsarist embassy in Unter den Linden, should be considered hers. She said, among other things, that Nicholas I had purchased the building from the Duchess of Courland back in 1837. The court, however, had been dragging its feet on the issue. German statesmen, who had a stake in establishing relations with Soviet Russia, were not inclined to meet the demands of the deposed Tsar's sister. After the signing of the Rapallo Treaty her suit was rejected. The German monarchists and Russian White emigrés raised a howl. That was why Litvinov wanted to hold his press conference in Berlin, expressly on the premises of the Soviet mission in the old embassy building, on sovereign Soviet territory.

On July 25, representatives of the biggest German newspapers and magazines, and foreign correspondents accredited in Berlin, gathered at 7 Unter den Linden. As a sign of respect for the Germans,

Litvinov opened the press conference in German, then switched to English, and replied to questions in both languages. He offered an overall evaluation of the Hague Conference. Now, after the conference, he said, the collective agreement principle would give way to the principle of individual agreements. From now on, he said, the Soviet government would deal with other governments separately. There was no other way. Litvinov did not deny that Russia was in need of foreign credits. But the correspondents were welcome to tell the public and all governments that it was impossible to say when exactly the debts would be returned.

An account of the press conference was cabled to Moscow. On July 27, 1922, *Izvestia* reported:

"Litvinov ended with the categorical statement that agreements between Russia and Europe were possible only if the European governments submitted their demands separately, because united action would be necessarily based on the maximum Franco-Belgian demands which Russia could not accept either today or in 50 years."

Litvinov was right. But it took much less than 50 years for the major capitalist countries to realise that their plans of restoring capitalism in Russia were doomed to failure. Their attempt to impose a colonial regime collapsed. What Litvinov predicted in his note to the Political Bureau soon came about. Eighteen months after the Hague Conference, the British government recognised the Soviet Union and resumed normal diplomatic relations. Italy did the same a week later, and in October 1924, Soviet Russia was also recognised by France, which had been the most hostile of all countries. A succession of countries followed suit. Like the Genoa Conference, the one in Hague contributed to the final destruction of capitalist delusions.

The Soviet diplomats were commended for their performance in Genoa and the Hague: in August 1922, at the 12th All-Russia Conference of the Communist Party, and at the 4th session of the Central Executive Committee on October 31, 1922, by Lenin, who stressed that Soviet Russia's foreign policy had secured "success in face of the governments of all countries".

Soon after the two conferences, personnel changes were initiated in the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. The diplomatic service was consolidated. Genoa and the Hague had revealed the capacity and range of the leading Soviet diplomats. The issue came up at a sitting of the Council of People's Commissars on November 14, 1922. Again, as on the day when Litvinov was made Deputy Commissar, Lenin was in the chair. The first item on the agenda was Litvinov's appointment as First Deputy of Chicherin, and Karakhan's as Second Deputy (by that time Karakhan had returned from Warsaw).



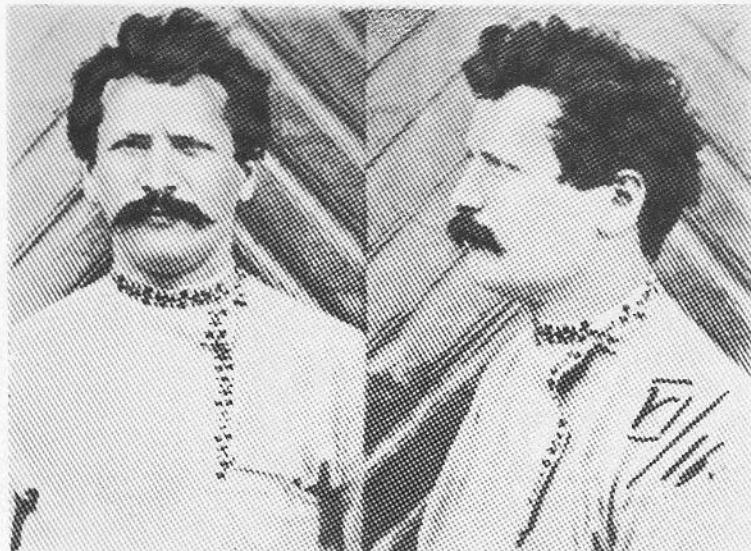
Litvinov received one more appointment. He and Felix Dzerzhinsky were made members of the Central Concessions Committee. The appointments were "individual", because the commissariats of Dzerzhinsky and Litvinov were already represented on the committee. Lenin had felt that the two should be personally included in that important body, which was directly subordinate to the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars.

While dealing with an avalanche of current affairs, Litvinov began preparing for a new major assignment. Even before the Hague Conference, the Soviet government had called on a number of countries to take part in an international disarmament conference in Moscow in the autumn of 1922.

Maxim Litvinov, 1898



Rakhil Dudovskaya-Rosenzweig, Litvinov's liaison in 1905-1907



Resolution of the Varna branch of the Bulgarian Communist Party on unveiling a memorial plaque on the building of the former Commercial Hotel



1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

UPR025-020076-185

от протокол от 14/06.1975 год.  
на впрото на об на БНП - страна

относно: изготвяне на проект за учредяване на община на запялките в съответствието на движения с планети плочи.

[illegible]

4. Да се поставят паметни плочи на сградите, където са се помещавали:

- Бившият хитър "Комсомолец"  
в гр. Варна, който през 1966 год.  
сега заедно с бродовете по море  
принадлежи на гр. Варна за казана са  
отсеждани и пребивавали известно  
време руските разведкочени  
НАЗНАЧЕНИ НАСЛЕДНИЦИ АКТИВНО, БОЯНИ  
ПРОБЛЕМ - НАДЪН В БУРНО СТОМАНА-  
НЕ:

— бившият хитов "Блещкати"  
/сега Република/ в гр. Варна, в  
който през 1916 година са отседна-  
ли пратонците на Коминтерна  
и държавния стражник и селянин  
Калоян Калоянчев, дошли в България  
све специална задача на Ком-  
интерна.











Red Square in Moscow on the second anniversary celebrations of the Great October Socialist Revolution, Lenin in the centre, Litvinov on the right



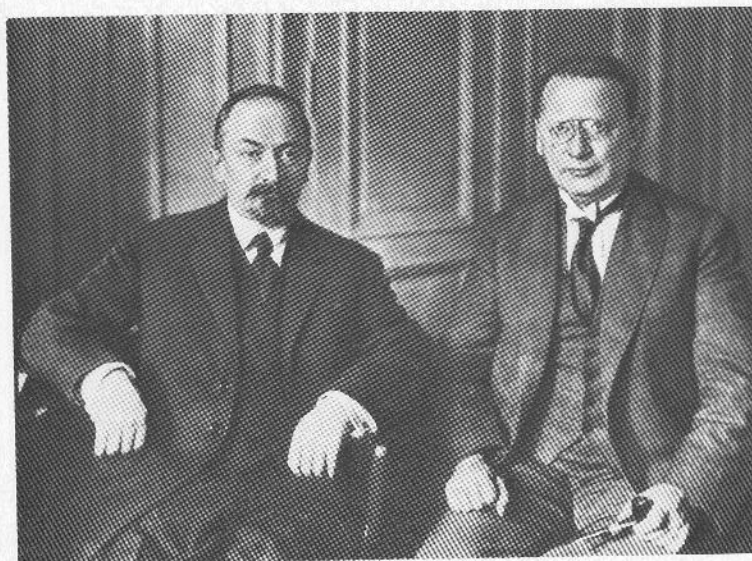


Maxim Litvinov in the early 1920s



The Soviet delegation in Genoa, 1922

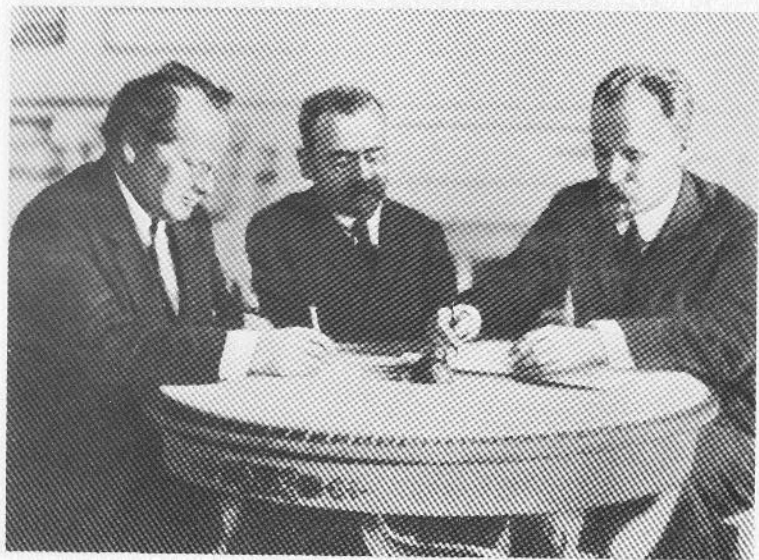
Georgy Chicherin and Maxim Litvinov



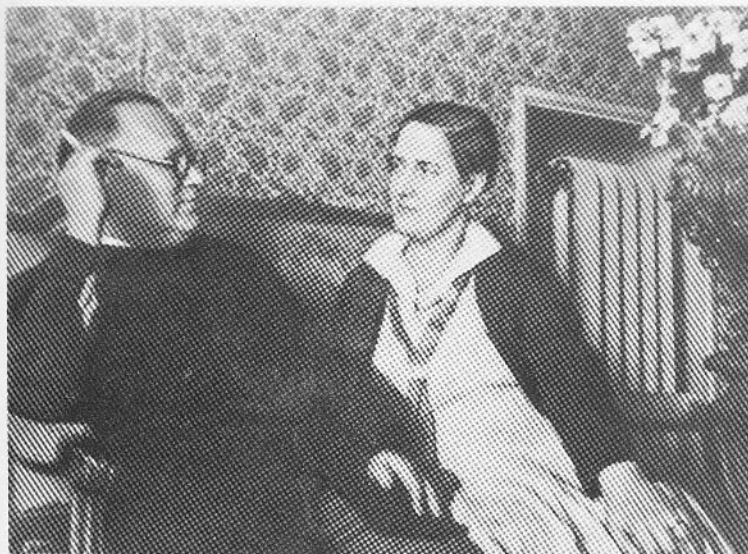


Maxim Litvinov stops over in Berlin on his way to Moscow from Genoa, 1922

Maxim Litvinov, Fyodor Rothstein, and Jan Berzins, Moscow, 1923



Litvinov with daughter Tania in the early 1930s



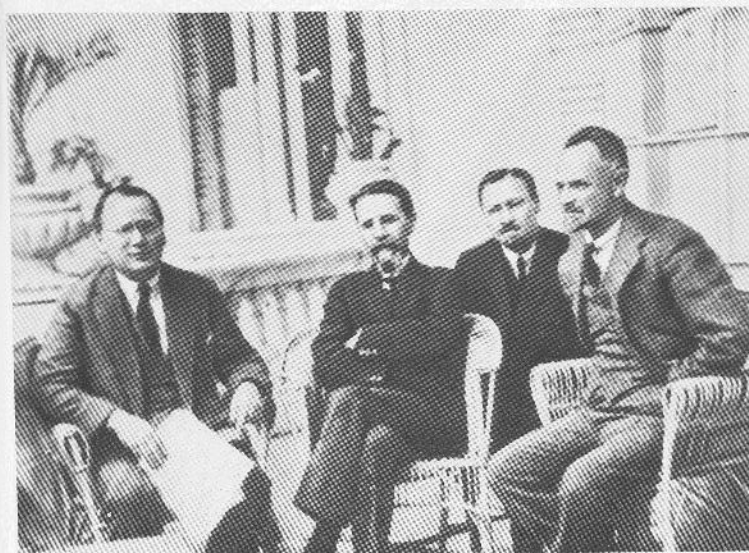


Litvinov's wife Ivy



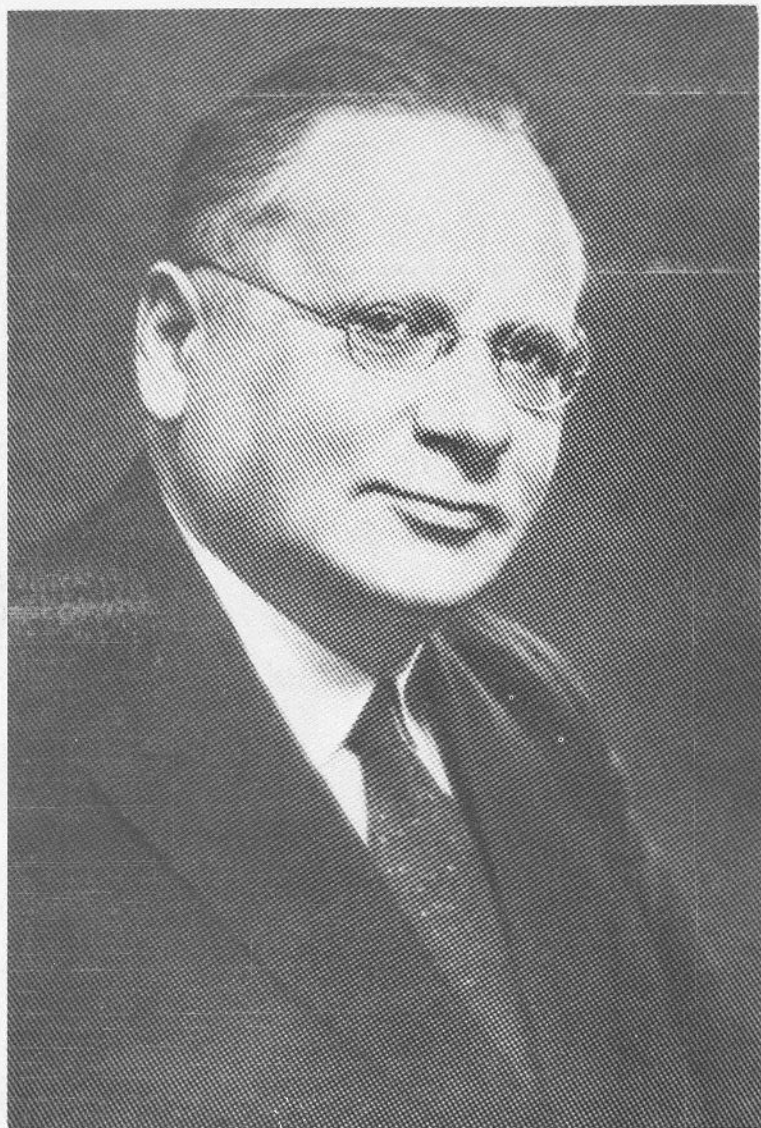
Staff members of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, 1923

Litvinov, Vaclav Vorovsky, an unidentified person, and Leonid Krasin,  
1922 or 1923





Litvinov in the late 1920s



Litvinov and his son Misha in Norway, 1918

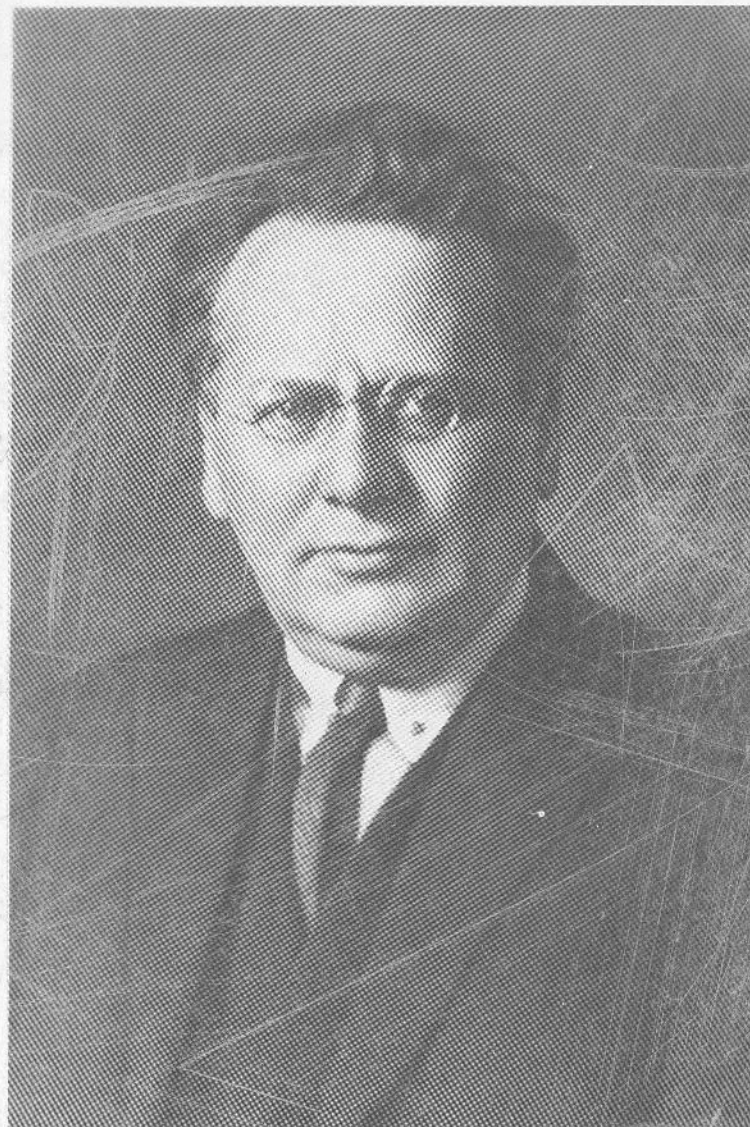




Litvinov's wife Ivy in London



Litvinov in the late 1920s





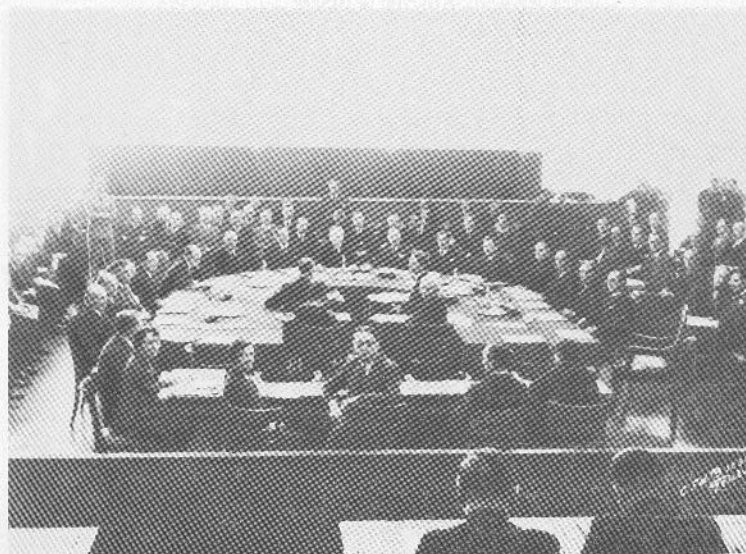
Staff members of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs at the end of the 1920s

Litvinov in Geneva, in the early 1930s



League of Nations, Geneva

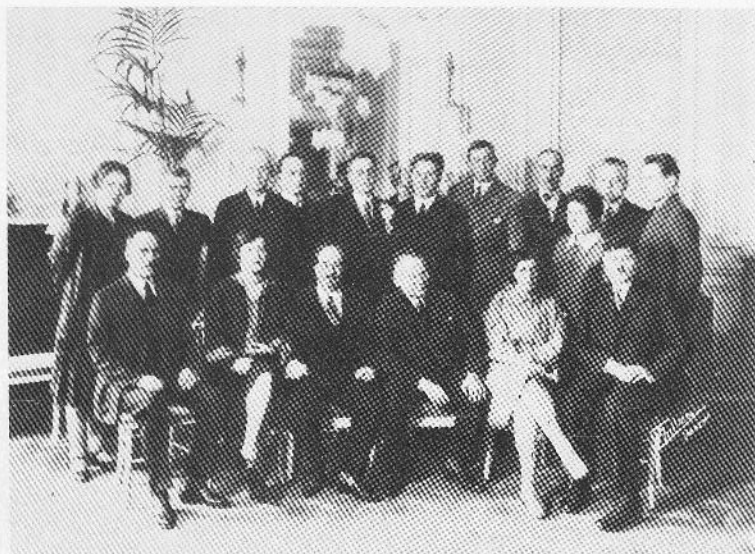
Disarmament Conference, Geneva, the 1930s





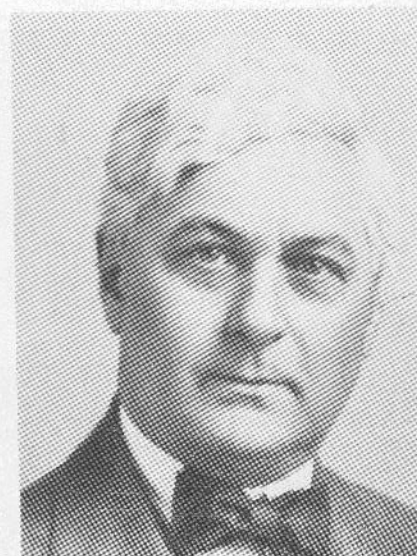
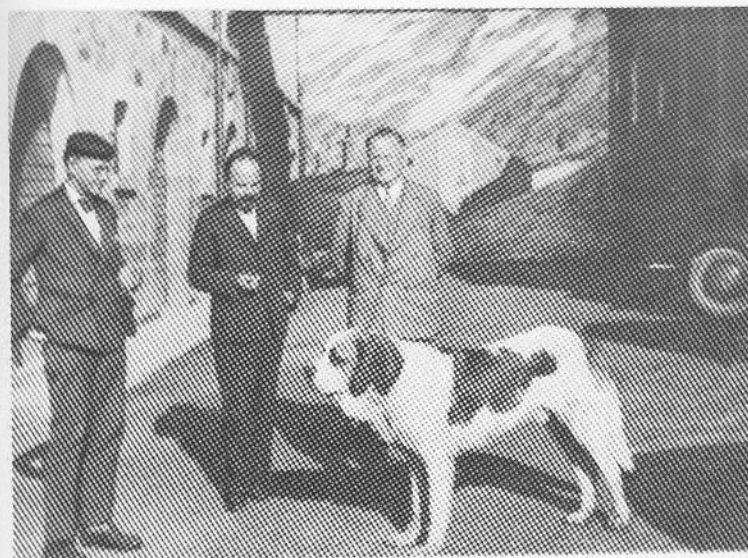
The Soviet delegation in Geneva, with Anatoly Lunacharsky and Maxim Litvinov sitting in the centre

Litvinov addressing the League of Nations, Geneva, early 1930s



Litvinov at the Pass of Saint Gotthard, Switzerland, in the early 1930s

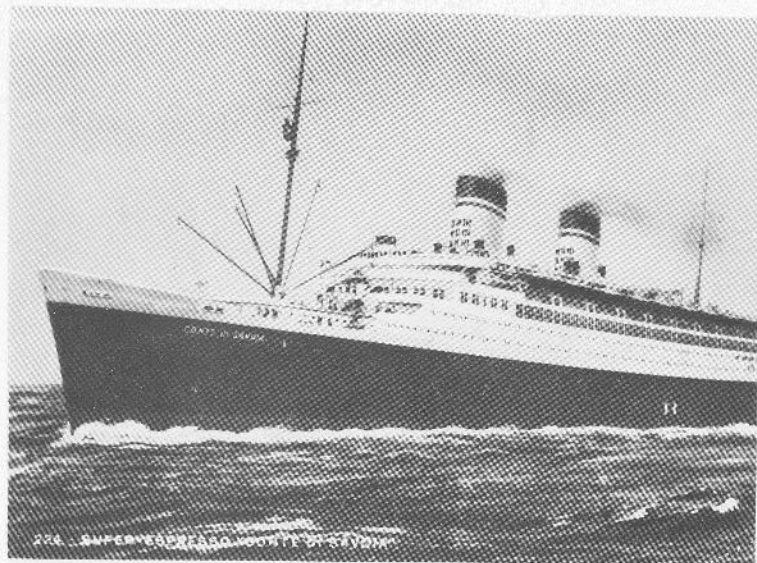
U.S. Senator Franck L. Fay, 1930





Litvinov on the deck of the *Berengaria* en route to the United States, 1933

The *Conte di Savoia*, on which Litvinov returned from the United States, 1933



An invitation to a meeting honouring Litvinov, USA, November 1933

Ivan Divilkovsky, General Secretary of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, who accompanied Litvinov on a visit to the USA

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*Trip of*  
*Maxim M. Litvinov*  
*People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs*  
*of the U.S.S.R.*  
*to*  
*Washington, D.C.*  
*November, 1933*

*Pennsylvania Railroad*



# The fare at the banquet in honour of Litvinov

Airman Mikhail Gromov in the United States after his flight across the North Pole, 1937

## *A La Carte*

*Soups*  
Cup 25; Tureen 35  
Clam Chowder Consomme, Hot or Jellied  
*Relishes*  
Celery 35 Tomato Juice 25 Olives 25 Sliced Tomatoes 35  
*Entrées*  
Filet of Blue Fish, Sauce, Meunière 75  
Scrambled Eggs on Anchovy Toast with Bacon 65  
Braised Long Island Duckling, Olives and Mushrooms 85  
*Off the Grill*  
Double Rib Lamb Chop 65 Sirloin Steak 1.75  
*Vegetables*  
Broccoli, Drawn Butter 30 Fresh String Beans 30  
Green Peas 25 Potatoes: Boiled, Saute or Rissolo 25  
*Cold Dishes*  
"PRR Salad Bowl" French Mixed Salad 25 cents per person  
Sardines 50 Combination Salad 45  
Head Lettuce or Lettuce and Tomato, French Dressing 45  
*Desserts and Cheese*  
Fresh Cranberry Pie (Baked on Car Today) 25;  
With Cheese 30  
Baked Apple 30 Ice Cream 30  
Camembert, Roquefort or Swiss Gruyere Cheese,  
Toasted Wafers 35  
*Tea, Coffee, Cocoa (Not for One), 25*  
Decaffeinated Coffee or Caramel Beverage 25  
Sweet Milk or Buttermilk (Buttled) 20  
*Bread*  
Whole Wheat, Raisin or Rye 15 Tea Biscuits 15 Toast 20

## *Luncheon*

1.25  
*Celery*  
Clam Chowder Consomme, Hot or Jellied  
Filet of Blue Fish, Sauce, Meunière  
Scrambled Eggs on Anchovy Toast with Bacon  
Braised Long Island Duckling, Olives and Mushrooms  
Grilled Lamb Chops  
Potatoes, Rissolo Fresh String Beans  
Bread and Butter or Tea Biscuits  
Head Lettuce, Thousand Island Dressing  
Fresh Cranberry Pie  
Ice Cream Baked Apple  
Cheese, Toasted Wafers  
Tea Coffee Milk Cocoa

Maxim Litvinov and Louis Barthou, 1934

Litvinov in Evian, France, 1934





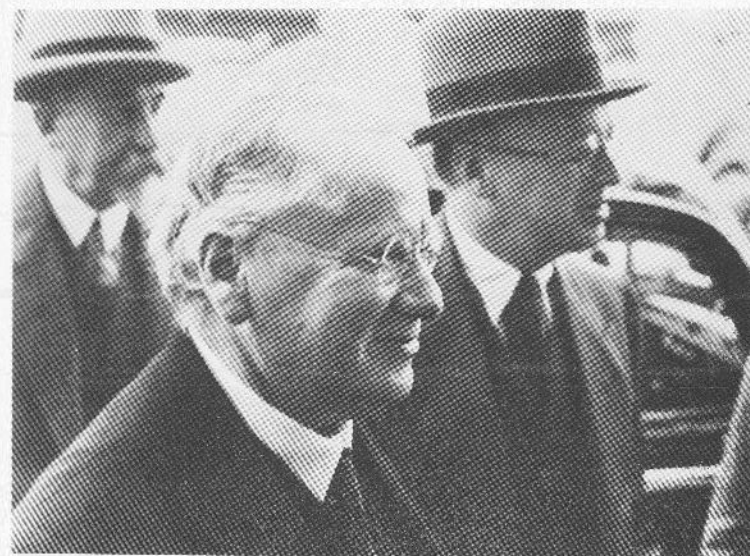
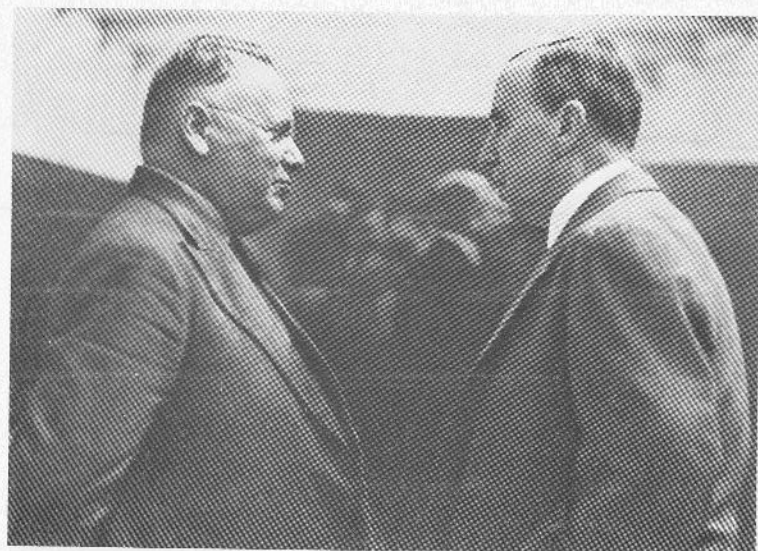
Maxim Litvinov and Yakov Surits, Geneva, 1934

Maxim Litvinov and Eduard Beneš, Geneva, 1934 or 1935



Litvinov speaking on his arrival in Geneva, 1933

Maxim Litvinov and Boris Stein





Litvinov converses with French diplomats

Litvinov and Spanish Foreign Minister Alvarez del Vayo, 1937



Litvinov and his wife Ivy

Litvinov in his office at the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs in the mid-1930s





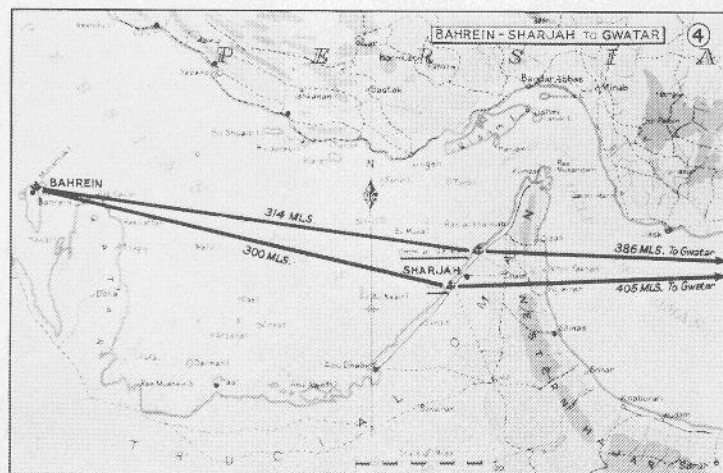
A black and white portrait of a man with short, light-colored hair, wearing glasses, a white shirt, a dark tie, and a suit jacket. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera. The image has a halftone texture.

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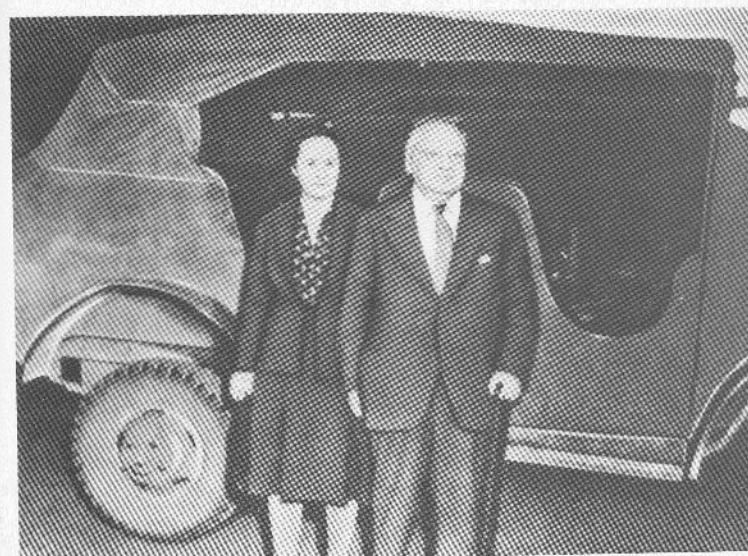
Maxim Litvinov in the United States, 1942

Facsimile of a fragment of Litvinov's flight map, 1941



Litvinov in his office at the Soviet Embassy in Washington, 1942

Litvinov and his secretary Anastasia Petrova, en route from the United States to Moscow





An inscription by Litvinov on the May 9, 1945 issue of *Izvestia*

Litvinov and his wife Ivy in New York, 1942



С победоносным завершением Великой

Подписание акта  
о безоговорочной капитуляции  
германских вооруженных сил  
АКТ О ВОЕННОЙ КАПИТУЛЯЦИИ

1. Мы, нижеподписавшиеся, действуя от имени Германского Верховного Командо-  
войска



RUSSIAN WANTS IN DEMOND. A Russian woman, possibly a diplomat, is seen signing a document at a table. Other people are visible in the background.

## Chapter 6

### ON THE UPGRADE

The eight years from 1922, when Litvinov returned from the Hague, until 1930, when he was appointed People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, may appear tranquil in comparison with the preceding and subsequent troubled and trying times.

On the face of it they were indeed tranquil: the armed intervention of the Entente powers was a thing of the past. So was the blockade and the Civil War, and hence also the various dangerous assignments and intricate missions.

Time marched on. The Soviet Republic healed its wounds, ended the dislocation, and embarked on peaceful construction. This imposed a titanic task on the Soviet diplomatic service. The breakthrough in Genoa was followed by an all-out diplomatic effort to win the recognition that was the due of the world's first socialist state. What the country needed most was a maximally long period of peace.

There were two fairly distinct stages in Litvinov's activity during that period. In the first, which lasted from 1922 to 1927, Chicherin and he built up and remodelled the diplomatic service. It had performed brilliantly during the Civil War and the foreign intervention. But all that time it had been in a state of flux.

Now it had to look farther ahead, pick new personnel, and improve the style of the central machinery and the ambassadorial corps. The staff had to learn diplomatic techniques, and make discipline its second nature, for that alone could make a policy work.

Chicherin and Litvinov laboured hand in hand shaping the Commissariat's structure to suit its tasks. They produced a new, rational system at home and for the diplomatic service abroad. One of their achievements was the system of training they devised for diplomatic personnel.

It was hard to find a better man for all this than Litvinov, who combined ideological firmness with a thorough knowledge of the outside world, backed up by a fluent command of foreign languages. He toured Soviet political missions abroad, of which the Soviet mission

in Berlin was one. He visited it in the autumn of 1922, and did a lot to rectify its style of work.

An episode occurred during his stay in Berlin which showed how right Lenin was to commend Litvinov's cool head. Moscow learned at the time that Urquhart, whom the Soviet government refused to grant a concession, was plotting mischief against Soviet Russia. On October 10, 1922, Lenin sent a coded telegram to Berlin: "Krasin and Chicherin say we will lose all our capital in Britain (up to 50 million gold roubles) owing to Urquhart's displeasure. The House of Lords may take action against us. What is your opinion? Take all requisite steps. Keep us informed. Lenin."

On October 12, Litvinov sent Chicherin a detailed letter, with a copy for the Political Bureau: he did not think there was reason for fear, because the British government would not make openly hostile moves against Soviet Russia in the prevailing unfavourable situation for it at home and abroad. "For this reason," he wrote, "I think we should take no special action."

Litvinov's judgement proved right.

His participation in shaping the diplomatic service was only part of what he did in those years. The Soviet Union's emergence in the world arena began in 1924. Diplomatic relations were established with all the major countries, except the United States of America. Chicherin and Litvinov conducted or directed negotiations. They saw to it that Soviet interests were not impinged upon, and that the USSR obtained the maximum benefit in the prevailing political and economic circumstances.

The second stage in Litvinov's activity of that period began in 1927, when he invariably represented the Soviet Union at international events as leader of its delegation.

In 1928, he in fact headed the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs owing to Chicherin's illness and departure to Germany for treatment.

Such, in general outline, was the picture of Litvinov's activity after the Genoa and Hague conferences until 1930.

Now, let us take a closer look at developments during that period. On June 12, 1922, Litvinov visited Estonia, Latvia, Poland, and Finland "to invite their plenipotentiary representatives to a conference for joint discussion with representatives of Russia of a proportional reduction of armed forces". Lithuania had accepted the invitation beforehand, and Romania had, in fact, turned it down.

Soviet Russia prepared the ground for the conference. It had reduced the Red Army to one-sixth of its strength when the Civil War

ended. Now, it numbered 800,000 men and officers, and the aim was to secure a further proportionate reduction of the Red Army and the armed forces of the neighbour countries.

The conference opened on December 2, 1922, at the Foreign Commissariat's building in Kuznetsky Most. "It was a morose winter's day," a participant recalled. "Candles were lit in the conference hall. The delegations and their experts were seated round a long cloth-covered table."

The climate was one of unease. The Baltic countries had sent experienced diplomats, who had no intention of meeting the wishes of Soviet Russia. Poland was represented by Prince Janusz Radziwill, landowner and close friend of Józef Pilsudski, and Finland by Foreign Minister Carl Enckell. Like the Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian representatives, they were closely connected with their countries' agrarian and industrial circles.

Litvinov made the introductory statement. "The Russian government," he said, "is aware that in view of the present social and economic system in most countries, based on the exploitation of man by man and of nation by nation, it is impossible to completely eliminate armed international conflicts. Attempts to regulate international relations by eliminating some of the old injustices, have only created new, still more crying, injustices, and new possible sources of war. The Russian government is convinced, however, that not only complete but even partial disarmament would reduce the possibility of armed clashes and, moreover, yield immediate tangible benefits through the reduction of financial burdens. That is the purpose behind the proposals of the Russian government. We believe that our proposals are concrete and practicable, and cannot be replaced by any so-called moral disarmament, of which so much is being said at international conferences when someone wants a pretext to evade disarmament."

Litvinov set forth the concrete Soviet programme—mutual reduction of ground forces, with the Russian army being cut to one-quarter of its strength within 18 months or two years, that is, to 200,000 men, and with a corresponding cut in the ground forces of the countries bordering on Russia in the West.

Litvinov rounded out this plan with the following ideas: that the contracting countries limit their military budgets, that the border zone be neutralised, and that irregular military units (the reference was to remnants of Russian counter-revolutionary troops which had found refuge in the Baltic states) be dissolved.

Ivan Maisky, who took part in the conference, wrote: "Litvinov spoke convincingly and firmly. His speech made a strong impression.



But I noticed with concern that Prince Radziwill sneered when he heard the offer of a 75 per cent reduction. And my concern turned out to be justified."

Litvinov could guess what the other negotiators had up their sleeve. That was why, he said, the conference should deal with disarmament and avoid talk of moral disarmament. But there was no stopping the Estonian delegate, who declared that "material disarmament should be preceded and accompanied by political disarmament". He was following British and French orders. Radziwill spoke to the same effect, and so did all the other delegates.

This tactic was no novelty for Litvinov. O'Grady had employed it in Copenhagen, as did all the time-hardened diplomats in Genoa and the Hague. The co-negotiators had to be made to join the fray by means of concrete proposals. And Litvinov came out with some on December 5 when the tactics of the Western diplomats had become quite clear.

On December 4, the Polish delegation submitted a moral disarmament project as the basis for material disarmament. This meant that the opposition intended to reduce matters to mere talk, and put off arms reduction indefinitely.

Litvinov drew up his statement the night before. He had no time or chance to have it approved by anyone. Lenin was at the Congress of the Communist International. Chicherin was in Lausanne. Still Litvinov was undismayed: he had the directives of the Central Committee and the government, the main ideas had been thrashed out and agreed upon, and he did not hesitate to assume full responsibility.

"The Russian government has always thought," he said, "that increasing armed forces or maintaining them at the present level is an expression of that very distrust of which so much has been said here by other delegations... In the opinion of the Russian government all the interested countries could express their confidence by agreeing to reduce armaments... The prime condition for moral disarmament is material disarmament, because by giving priority to moral disarmament we would confine ourselves to mere words and papers, while in the second case we could prove our readiness by our deeds."

Backstage, the Polish delegate called on his colleagues to reject the Soviet proposals. He told his partners that Soviet Russia was preparing an attack. Litvinov got wind of Radziwill's intrigues. At one of the sittings, he declared that as chairman of the Russian delegation and one of the chiefs of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs he considered it his duty to make a categorical statement: the Russian government had no intention whatsoever to attack the territory of its close or far neighbours, or to resolve any disputes with them by force

of arms. This statement shall be put down in the minutes and proceedings of the present sitting. And Litvinov added: "If you want my signature to this pledge, you can have it."

On December 5, Litvinov again expounded the Soviet position: the danger of war is directly proportionate to the number of men and guns, so that their reduction will be an immeasurably more dependable guarantee against war than signing peaceful resolutions.

Soviet Russia, Litvinov said, was farthest from the thought of creating illusions and deceiving anyone.

The discussion went on and on. It was clearer with each passing day that the Baltic diplomats were out to wreck the conference. Finally, they said they could not cut their armies 75 per cent. A smaller reduction, they said, could perhaps be acceptable. Litvinov responded immediately: Soviet Russia, he said, would accept a 25 per cent cut, and suggested non-aggression agreements.

On December 11, however, the Polish, Finnish, Latvian, and Estonian representatives issued a joint declaration saying mutual disarmament and a proportional reduction of armaments was unacceptable. Furthermore, they falsified the numerical strength of their armies. Litvinov made one more attempt to secure action. With figures in hand, he proved that a proportionate reduction of armed forces, especially the modest reduction envisaged at the conference, would not change the balance of strength in Russia's favour; on the contrary, owing to its enormous territory and the length of its eastern and south-eastern borders, the balance would tilt against Russia.

The Soviet delegation also made a few concessions. But this did not help either. The other side was intent on torpedoing the negotiations. Arms reduction was obfuscated by talk about moral disarmament. The Soviet delegation made clear that since the Baltic delegates had halted work in the commission of military experts, which had been looking into practical disarmament, it considered this "a refusal to accept the disarmament proposals of the Russian government, and would let the public draw the due conclusions".

Now the immediate task was to attract public attention to the Soviet proposals. Litvinov called a press conference. He summed up the results of the conference and said Russia wanted peace because it was busy building socialism.

Though the conference had passed no decisions, it had been useful for, as Litvinov noted, if the neighbouring peoples renounced the prejudice about Soviet aggressiveness, if they believed the absolute love of peace of the Soviet worker-peasant government which was devoting all its energy to Russia's economic revival, the conference will have served its purpose.

The Western diplomats left Moscow uncertain of whether they had won or lost. The answer was provided by some of the world's major newspapers. They noted that ever since their first call for peace in October 1917, the Bolsheviks had held the initiative firmly.

The Foreign Commissariat became more cohesive after Genoa and the Hague. Chicherin devoted most of his attention to the East. Litvinov occupied himself with the West. But he also had his eye on the Orient. The work styles of the two diplomats were different as before. Chicherin worked round the clock—after hours in his flat in the Foreign Commissariat building. When tired, he played the piano. Mozart's sweet music eased the stresses. Everybody had grown accustomed to Chicherin's nightly vigils. He got up around 11 a.m. and by lunch managed a whole lot. After lunch he had a nap. Then he worked again: promptly, vigorously, cleverly. Not all people could follow his schedule. Sometimes funny incidents occurred. Sculptor Clare Sheridan, for example, who visited Moscow soon after the Revolution, wanted to portray the Russian leaders, and asked Chicherin when he could sit for her. "Come at four in the morning. That is the best time," he said. The Englishwoman replied, "I also think it is the best time—for sleeping."

Litvinov had a different schedule. He worked nights only in extreme cases. After the Hague Conference he asked for a little bigger flat—and was granted one of three tiny rooms. One for him and his wife, one for their son and daughter, and the third a study.

In the mornings, punctually at one and the same time, he appeared at the Foreign Commissariat. The watchmaker who looked after the timepieces in the Commissariat building once said, if the old pocket-watch he had inherited from his grandmother let him down, he would set it by Litvinov.

The Collegium of the Foreign Commissariat, which dealt with the most serious issues, usually gathered twice a week. Often, arguments occurred. Rank was no object. A well-grounded opinion was what mattered. The opinion of the chiefs of departments was treated with due respect. If an important issue arose while the chief of the pertinent department was absent, Chicherin would always say they should wait and hear what the department chief had to say.

Fundamental differences of opinion would arise. Whenever a proposal that went against Litvinov's grain was adopted, he mumbled for the secretary to record his objections in the minutes. Thereupon, he would expound his view in a letter to the Central Committee.

Sometimes, it was the other way round, with Chicherin asking the secretary to put down his objections, and writing a letter to the Central Committee. The Political Bureau would then make the final deci-

sion. Its decision, that of the governing body of Party and State, was carried out to the letter. And often it was the opponent who was assigned to carry it into effect.

Litvinov's style of work, and his relationship with the personnel, was invariably precise, orderly, punctual, and clear.

Yuri Kozlovsky, who had worked by Litvinov's side for many years, said, "Litvinov had a precise work schedule. He did everything promptly. In the mornings, he looked through the coded messages and the mail. At the appointed hour he received colleagues and visitors. He had his breakfast in time, and his dinner in time. He used to say anyone who could not manage his job within the working hours, was a poor organiser. Once, Krestinsky, his first deputy, wanted to see Litvinov. On coming to Litvinov's door, however, he glanced at his watch and turned back. It was five minutes past seven, and he knew Litvinov was out, for the working day was over.

And here is the evidence of Yuri Kozlovsky's namesake, yet another prominent member of the Commissariat, Benedict Kozlovsky, who had for many years been Soviet Consul-General in Shanghai and had held other top diplomatic jobs. "Litvinov," he said, "is a model of good organisation. Never has he wasted anybody's time. Never has he made anyone wait. But neither does he let anyone waste his own time. He receives people at the appointed hour, and never lets a visit drag out. He asks the visitor's pardon, looks at his watch, and says others are waiting."

Litvinov was always glad to help the younger members of the staff. But he never reduced his advice to lecturing. He considered it more useful for experience and knowledge to accumulate in the process of work, and always encouraged young people. One day, he and a group of colleagues were discussing the appointment of a certain young man. One of them said the young man was a careerist. Litvinov retorted: "Show me a young man who does not want to make a career." This settled it.

Litvinov could not bear sneaks and informers. He re-educated them in his own way. Once, a young man raised a number of groundless charges in a letter against his department chief. His letter also contained a few dubious recommendations. Litvinov called a staff meeting, and spoke of the style that should prevail in the diplomatic service. He let everybody have his say, then expounded his own ideas. After the conference was over, in the presence of the young man, he handed the letter to the department chief, saying he should look into the recommendations it contained.

To be talkative, Litvinov held, was for a diplomat an unforgivable failing. One day he learned that a high-ranking member of the staff,



a man who often attended collegium sittings, had talked too freely. Litvinov decided to teach him a lesson. At a sitting, he said to him, "I beg you to leave for a few minutes. I have to speak to the comrades of a strictly confidential matter."

Soon thereafter, Litvinov had him transferred to another job.

The failure of their armed intervention had a sobering effect on the capitalist states. But each day held new surprises for the Soviet Union. Here are just a few of the problems Litvinov dealt with in the space of a few months in 1923:

1. The Norwegian government unilaterally terminated Spitzbergen's economic ties with the Soviet Union. This could have a deleterious effect on the northern and north-western regions, which got their coal from Spitzbergen. Litvinov launched an exchange of letters with Mowinckel, Norway's Foreign Minister, and settled the issue.

2. An impostor made his appearance in Mexico: a certain Baron Weindhausen-Rosenberg had assumed the functions of Russian consul in that far-away country, and refused to accept the fact that a Revolution had occurred in Russia six years before. Litvinov managed to have the impostor driven out. Alexandra Kollontai was sent to Mexico as Soviet envoy.

3. In his flight from the Crimea, counter-revolutionary General Wrangel took along the funds of the Petrograd Credit Bank, including not only private but also state deposits. In Kotor, Yugoslavia, he started a brisk trade in valuables. Litvinov set about recovering them.

4. A lot of Russians were stranded in Bulgaria. Deceived by counter-revolutionary propaganda, some of them blackmailed, they were in a sorry state, and had to be helped to return home. Litvinov found a way. He addressed himself to a man known and revered all over the world: Fridtjof Nansen. In his letter to Nansen, he wrote: "An undertaking of tremendous humanitarian significance, the repatriation of Russian citizens, started with your dedicated assistance, is foundering: many thousands of Russians deceived by counter-revolutionary generals have suffered incredible privations for a number of years, and are thirsting to return home to a new, honest life. They are now reduced ... to further hardships and privations in a foreign land."

5. The French government, too, was delaying the repatriation of Russian citizens. To speed matters up, the Foreign Commissariat sent a Red Cross mission to France. The mission reached Berlin, where the French Embassy refused it entry visas to France. Litvinov cabled Foreign Minister Poincaré. Poincaré began hedging. Parliament, he maintained, had failed to provide credits for repatriation. He swore love for the Russian people. Litvinov replied assurances of affection

were worthless if unseemly actions were causing "enormous disappointment among people who were impatiently awaiting the arrival of the Russian delegation and permission to return home". Soon thereafter the repatriation began.

6. One more thieving act by General Wrangel: he had seized and taken out of Constantinople nine Soviet merchant steamers. The Foreign Commissariat started a fight for those ships.

Petty concerns alternated with bigger ones. Anglo-Soviet relations deteriorated abruptly in the spring of 1923. The deterioration began when British trawlers began making free use of Russia's northern waters. The Soviet authorities detained *James Johnson*, a British fishing vessel. The Foreign Office was in tantrums. Litvinov handled the case calmly. It was as though he, rather than the British, was endowed with the typically English restraint. Hodgeson, the British agent in Moscow, was making threatening noises. But the facts were against him. Soviet territorial waters had been invaded. "The Russian government," Litvinov wrote to Hodgeson, "wants to handle the problem of territorial waters in the peaceful spirit that guides it in all other foreign affairs."

London, however, continued to stoke up tension. Its pride was hurt. It ordered a gunboat to make for Murmansk, threatening to resort to force. Curzon sent an ultimatum. Ramsay MacDonald, Labour Party leader, cabled Moscow he and his party were alarmed that a rift may occur before arbitration and negotiation are used to find a settlement. On May 11, 1923, Litvinov replied, "I want to reassure you that though the Soviet government will not submit to ultimatums and threats, it is always prepared to settle Russo-British disputes in a peaceful spirit, as the decision to release the detained trawlers has proved."

On the same day, acting on instructions, Litvinov replied to Curzon's ultimatum. He wrote that the British government had evidently acted on an essentially wrong impression about the state of the Russian Republics imparted by counter-revolutionary emigrés. Again, Litvinov offered to settle the conflict peacefully, "in the interests of universal peace, of the economic rehabilitation of war-ravaged Europe, and of the British as well as Soviet peoples".

Soon, the conflict was settled.

To appreciate Litvinov's self-possession, we might recall the conditions in which Soviet diplomats functioned in those days: Vaclav Vorovsky, once an *Iskra* agent and a close friend of Litvinov's, was killed in Lausanne.

On May 10, 1924, at the unveiling of Vorovsky's monument in Moscow, Litvinov said, "A year ago, a typical representative of the

moribund, obscurantist and man-hating world, the reactionary Lord Curzon, fired an ultimatum at the heart of the burgeoning new world—the Soviet Republic. Two days later, the English lord's worthy pupil and servant, the whiteguard Konradi, a scion of Russian reaction, fired at Comrade Vorovsky, a representative of the Soviet republics.

"Both acts were the effect of the same causes and had the same purpose. They show the dismay of the international bourgeoisie, which was disgracefully defeated in its first intervention and blockade of the Soviet republics. But these shots have also been a signal for international fascist gangs to mount a fresh assault on the fortress of the proletarian revolution. But the gangs failed to rally. The attempt suffered dismal failure. The Soviet republics have squashed Lord Curzon's aims with ease and dignity.

"The shots fired by Curzon and Konradi were like rearguard actions of the international bourgeoisie, which had ended its first intervention in disgrace."

The international situation called for vigilance. It also called for flexibility and caution. Soviet diplomacy avoided being provoked, and that took skill. Every time a foreigner was arrested, the outside world responded with notes of protest. In some cases, the security service was mistaken. On one occasion, Litvinov approached Dzerzhinsky, who was in charge of security.

"You're interfering with our work," Litvinov said. He said people were sometimes arrested on no serious grounds, and the diplomatic service had to make amends when notes of protest poured in.

After a pause, striding up and down his office, Dzerzhinsky said:

"All foreigners are kept in one prison. I'll have a pass made out to you. Go, look at them. If you find we have done wrong, release them."

After Litvinov's conversation with Dzerzhinsky, some of the foreigners were released, and expelled from the Soviet Union.

In the evenings, at home, Litvinov was a different man: he left his troubles in the office. The family led a spartan life. In winter, the rooms were barely heated, as in England. Everyone had his duties. But when Litvinov was home, the time was passed in merriment. Litvinov's sense of humour was inexhaustible. He put on comic performances. "We liked those evenings of laughter," his daughter Tatiana recollected. "Father liked to train our memories—his own, my brother's, and mine. He would speak some word and wanted us to find another beginning with its last letter. He liked poetry, especially Pushkin, knew him by heart, and always found new overtones in his lines.

"We often heard Father converse with Mother at breakfast. To be fair, it was a one-way street. Mother spoke, Father kept quiet. He would move a plate or a cup, emitting some sound of approval or negation."

Months and years passed, abounding in important business.

Litvinov would soon be fifty. Was he pleased with himself? He had no time to think of the past. But friends from the Institute of Party History (now the Institute of Marxism-Leninism) kept dragging him back to the olden days. They asked him to write his memoirs. They begged him to find time for it, it was important for the edification of posterity. They told him not to forget London, and Zurich, and *Iskra*. But Litvinov was too busy. Nor did he care writing about himself. On two or three occasions only was he prevailed upon to write up some episode.

No, he was not averse to visiting Kiev and seeing the prison cell where he had spent many months. Or visiting the Klinty factory—there must still be people there who knew him. Or going to Leninograd for a week, wandering about the town and seeing familiar places. Or perhaps going to Samara or Bezhitsa, where he received coded letters from Krupskaya. Or should he visit the Caucasus and Tiflis? What a pity Kamo was no more. They would have talked about the past.

But he had work to do. And did not go anywhere.

January 21, 1924, the day Lenin died, was a black day. For Litvinov it was a personal tragedy. He had lost a close friend, a wise adviser under whose guidance he had worked for the Party for dozens of years.

Ivy Litvinova recollected:

"Maxim would not go to bed. All night he walked up and down the room. In London, he had not told me of his Party affairs. I had no idea about his corresponding with Lenin. He concealed his Party connections most carefully. But that night was a night of remembrances—not exactly remembrances, but brush strokes touching up Lenin's portrait. He spoke of his meetings with Lenin, and one meeting in particular: in 1920. I don't remember why I had not gone with him to the Bolshoi. Probably I was out of sorts. He went without me. They were showing *The Barber of Seville*. Litvinov was alone in one of the boxes. He could not know that Lenin was looking for him on some urgent matter. Maxim's secretary told Lenin he was at the Bolshoi, and asked if he should be summoned. Lenin said no. Between acts, Maxim found Lenin waiting for him outside his box. They dis-



cussed the urgent business, and Lenin left."

In the mid-twenties, government after government began to recognise the Soviet Union. But mere recognition was not enough. Soviet policy was designed to normalise relations. The diplomatic service was concluding agreements, treaties, and conventions with the aim of securing the maximum advantage.

The negotiations with Italy were a good illustration of Litvinov's diplomatic methods. The Duce, who in those early days liked to parade what he called his socialist views, had said more than once that Italy would recognise the Soviet Union. He said so again in the Chamber of Deputies on November 30, 1923. But that was as far as he went. He bargained for better terms, then dragged his feet over diplomatic recognition.

MacDonald's Labour government was a jump ahead: it recognised the Soviet Union *de jure* on February 1, 1924.

Litvinov resorted to his favourite ploy. On February 6, he spoke to an *Izvestia* correspondent, giving his opinion of the case. Imposing terms on the Soviet Union, he said, was a futile occupation. It only complicated matters, and delayed recognition. This applied to any country that wished to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Referring to Italy, Litvinov said, "Mr. Mussolini, who had obviously wanted to be the first to recognise the USSR, let Britain get ahead because he lacked the courage of doing what MacDonald did—to renew diplomatic relations with the Soviet republics irrespective of the final outcome of the commercial talks."

The Italian economy was badly in need of relations with the Soviet Union, and Moscow knew it. On the following day, Italy recognised the Soviet Union *de jure* and Mussolini satisfied his ego: while Britain appointed a *chargé d'affaires* to represent it in Moscow, the Italian government appointed an ambassador.

Why did Britain appoint a *chargé d'affaires*? Was it a trick? In any case, the thing had to be clarified. And again Litvinov spoke to an *Izvestia* correspondent. He said he wanted the public to know that Moscow was cognizant of the refinements of diplomacy, and would not let itself be led up the garden path. "I should like to settle a misunderstanding connected with the British note of recognition," Litvinov said. "The mention of the temporary appointment of *chargés d'affaires* instead of ambassadors does not mean, according to information we have from London, that the British government intends to establish an intermediate form of representation. According to international custom, preliminary approval of nominations is required before ambassadors are appointed, and *chargés d'affaires* are appointed in the meantime... Future historians will

have to decide who was first to recognise us, Britain or Italy. For us, Italy's recognition will be valuable even if it comes a few days later."

What confidence in his cause! What subtle irony in his statements! But Litvinov could also be merciless when required. He could act with cosmic speed, like a boxer in the ring, knocking out his adversary, giving him no time to regain his senses. This he showed during the incident at the Soviet Trade Mission in Berlin.

The bourgeois world could not reconcile itself to the Rapallo Treaty. Germany was continuously urged to harass the Soviet Union. On May 3, 1924, the Berlin police invaded the premises of the Soviet Trade Mission in Lindenstrasse. They said they were looking for an escaped criminal. They searched the premises, broke furniture, and ... arrested a few members of the Mission's staff. The incident was like a rehearsal of what became commonplace in the Third Reich a mere nine years later.

This could be an excuse for breaking off relations with the Soviet Union. Immediate action was called for, and the Foreign Commissariat was instructed to take it. It had to be firm and swift, because the German government, and Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann in particular, were evasive and refused to acknowledge blame.

The Foreign Commissariat became a command centre, sending instructions and receiving requisite information from Berlin and other places. The diplomatic documents of those days were like wartime battle reports. Indeed, the whole thing was like a battle to show the Soviet Union would leave no insult or injury unpunished.

Events developed swiftly. The Soviet Union applied economic sanctions. Sale of corn to Germany was halted on May 5. Soviet ships received orders not to enter German ports. A shipment of eggs from the Ukraine to Berlin was readdressed to London. So were other food shipments.

The opening of branches of the Soviet Rubber Agency in Germany on May 3, was cancelled. The Soviet staff, who had already arrived in Berlin, were recalled. Soviet trade missions in Berlin, Leipzig and Hamburg, and branches of Soviet economic agencies in Germany, were closed down. A purchasing mission that arrived in Berlin on May 3 to buy medical supplies, received instructions to buy nothing, and deal with other countries. All trading with German firms was halted. Orders worth 8,140,000 dollars, a large sum in those times, were annulled. And this finishing touch: the Soviet Union refused to take part in the Leipzig bristles auction.

A commotion broke out in Berlin, Hamburg, Leipzig, Frankfurt-on-Main, and other large German cities. The papers put out extras,

reporting the disastrous consequences of the Soviet moves for the German economy.

Litvinov received hourly round-ups of what the German press was saying. He read and emitted his sacramental grunts. He and Chicherin discussed further steps, and called up the Central Committee, reporting results. When the culmination was reached, Litvinov summoned an *Izvestia* correspondent. "The sudden and senseless attack of the Berlin police on our Trade Mission," he said, "was not only a formal breach of extraterritoriality and an insult to the Soviet government, but also an action which deprived our Trade Mission of requisite conditions to work normally. The extraterritoriality of our Trade Mission flows from the Soviet-German agreement of 1921, which the Rapallo Treaty has not repealed."

Berlin was making incomprehensible noises about the behaviour of the police. Well, he would speak his mind about that, too. He knew the ways of the Berlin police. He had had a taste of them once. Here Litvinov launched a devastating attack on the German authorities:

"The explanation of the German Foreign Ministry is farcical and cannot be taken seriously. They say everything is simple and clear. Württemberg policemen were accompanying a dangerous criminal through Berlin. Late for the train, thirsting for refreshments, they found no beer hall or restaurant in the adjoining streets, and let the captive lead them. He took them a few miles to the Trade Mission in search of a mug of beer. The Württemberg policemen had evidently never seen a beer hall before, and mistook the imposing building of the Soviet Trade Mission for one. They did not see the signboard on the door, and happily followed the captive's invitation to enter the house in search of beer. There, the captive disappeared, while force was applied to the policemen themselves. A malicious and untrue explanation if there ever was one."

This was taking the bull by the horns. The Rapallo Treaty had been signed only two years before. It was rightly described as a major victory for Soviet foreign policy. Did the incident mean that the winds were turning? This troubled people in the Soviet Union and in Germany. The public wanted to know. Litvinov provided the answer: "The common economic and political interests that were behind the Rapallo Treaty will for a long time retain their validity. I do not believe the German government was deliberately seeking to change the relations that prevail between the Soviet republics and Germany."

A few days later, German ambassador Count Brockdorff-Rantzau asked to be received. Chicherin and Litvinov demanded that the Ger-

man government apologise, that the culprits be punished, and the damage made good.

The Count said his goodbyes and left. Three days later he came again. Litvinov repeated the demands. Finally, it sank in in Berlin that the Soviet government meant business. A protocol settling the incident was signed on July 29, 1924. The German government expressed its regrets, the man who had been in charge of the police action was removed from office, and all the other culprits were punished. Point 3 of the protocol read: "The German Government states that it is ready to pay for the damage inflicted by German officials in the building of the Trade Mission."

This was the first time a major power had apologised to the Soviet Union. The incident was settled. The viability of the Rapallo Treaty was reaffirmed. The Soviet government's prestige increased in its own country and in the rest of the world.

The bourgeois press noted the proper and polite handling of the case by the Soviet diplomatic service, its restraint and sense of dignity.

Was Litvinov himself pleased with the result? He was a quiet man who never expressed delight or made hasty judgements. He had a knack of waiting and looking into the future. That was why he began to scrutinise what was going on in Germany.

The fact that Chicherin devoted most of his time to the countries of the East, created the opinion that Litvinov did not handle any Eastern affairs. As always since pagan times, an often repeated conjecture won followers. To this day, some Western historians think Litvinov had no access to Eastern affairs. Even later, when he was People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, he was thought to be cooler towards the Orient, while Karakhan, and later Stomoniakov, dealt with the East.

Did Litvinov really underestimate the East? There is incontrovertible proof that Litvinov showed an interest in the Eastern countries already in the early days of his diplomatic activity, and that he had a concept of his own. It was expounded in the letter to the Politbureau on the eve of the Genoa Conference in early February 1922. That letter said: "The present Eastern governments do not aspire to national liberation; they are quite ready to sell themselves, to sell the interests of their countries, and doubly so to sell us. Coolness towards us of the ruling spheres will not hinder but, on the contrary, help us support the democratic movement there to the extent that such a movement exists."

Those last few words are the key to Litvinov's point of view at



that time. There had been Eastern countries then, and Turkey is evidence of this, whose government aspired to national liberation. But most Eastern countries were then colonies and semi-colonies, and were wholly or partly dependent on the colonial powers. Even such large countries as China and India had practically no working class—the main bearer of the revolutionary outlook. The Eastern countries rightly considered the Soviet Union their champion against colonial oppression. This was a good basis for having relations with them. And, beyond question, Soviet diplomacy endeavoured to arrange such relations. Litvinov spent much time studying Soviet relations with Afghanistan, China, Persia, and Turkey—especially when, on October 18, 1924, the second session of the Central Executive Committee heard Chicherin's report and approved the activity of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs "aimed at strengthening peace and consolidating the international situation of the Soviet Union, notably securing normal relations with countries of East and West."

S. I. Aralov wrote in his memoirs:

"In the Foreign Commissariat Chicherin and Karakhan handled Eastern affairs, while Litvinov handled the West. The East was closer to Lev Karakhan's heart, for he was from the Orient. Chicherin, meanwhile, who developed Lenin's ideas about the East far more sharply than others, settled all questions only after seeking Litvinov's advice. Litvinov had a splendid grasp of all possible political situations. He always reached down to their essence."

Ties with the Eastern countries became more diverse. In 1926, the Amir of Afghanistan, 34-year-old Amanullah Khan, who had established diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia back in 1919, came on a visit to Moscow. He was put up in a house across the river from the Kremlin, and accorded every courtesy. A big Kremlin reception was given in his honour. Since the Afghan ruler was fond of horses, fine Arab horses were brought to Moscow. The embankment was under water owing to a flood. So the gate to the guest house was tarred to make it waterproof. And people used the backway. That is where the horses were brought for the Amir to see. He was a connoisseur, inspected the animals carefully, expressed his admiration, and picked out a few splendid specimens.

The talks with Amanullah Khan concerned a further extension of political and economic ties. Litvinov took part in them. The friendly relations established in 1919 and entrenched by a treaty concluded between the Russian Federation and Afghanistan on February 28, 1921, became still closer.

Litvinov had negotiated with Eastern diplomats on other occasions as well. When Georgy Chicherin left the country for a six-

months' cure abroad, Litvinov deputised for him.

There was a dramatic train of events in the Far East just then. After a conflict erupted on the Chinese Eastern Railway in January 1926, there was a series of anti-Soviet actions. On April 6, 1927, police and soldiers broke into the Soviet Mission's building in Peking, smashed up the furniture, and arrested some of the staff. In Shanghai, too, Soviet diplomats defended themselves with pistols against a band of attackers.

The attacks on the Soviet missions were organised by reactionary British quarters. A British Embassy official was just then negotiating with the Canton government, which was demanding that British troops withdraw from China. The negotiations collapsed. Britain fell back on fabricated "papers" to launch a malicious anti-Soviet campaign, saying the breakdown of the Sino-British talks had been engineered by "Soviet agents".

Litvinov had his hands full, and missed Chicherin very much. That was probably why he referred more often than usual to the Party's Central Committee, and submitted recommendations to the government. In his letters to the Council of People's Commissars he never used such expressions as "we most strongly beg" or "the Foreign Commissariat insists". He preferred, "We request" or "the Foreign Commissariat recommends". Once approved, Litvinov's recommendations were at once carried into effect.

On February 19, 1927, twenty-nine members of the Central Executive Committee asked for an explanation concerning the malicious attacks on the Soviet Union by some members of the British government. On February 21, Litvinov spoke on this subject at a CEC session. "A new anti-Soviet campaign has broken out in Britain today," he said, "but it dates back to the days when we had no diplomatic relations. In fact, it has never ceased since those days, quieting down for a while, then erupting again with added force at times when Britain experiences difficulties at home or abroad."

Litvinov identified those who had inspired and organised the new anti-Soviet campaign. They were the same enemies who had cracked the code he had used in Copenhagen in 1920—first of all, the Russian White émigrés, monarchists, and former tsarist dignitaries entrenched in London, where they took advantage of their old connections and the patronage of British officialdom, even some members of the British cabinet, and, second, the small but wealthy group of so-called creditors, that is, those industrialists whose property in Russia had been nationalised, and those speculators who had bought stocks and shares from former Russian industrialists, with the oil magnates at their head.

"These people," Litvinov said, "still think childishly that they can intimidate the 150-million population of the Soviet Union, and impose their terms."

The Soviet Union, Litvinov went on to say, had never concealed its sympathy for the Chinese people in their fight for independence. This, he added, should not hinder normal relations with Britain.

"Acting on the will for peace of the Soviet people, and similarly of the mass of the people in Britain," Litvinov added, "the Soviet Government will continue its policy of peace, which rules out any and all aggressiveness towards other countries."

It was a hot spring in 1927. The Chinese warlords, goaded by the British, continued their attacks, searches, plunder, and manhandling of Soviet citizens. The tension in London reached its apex on May 12, when the police raided ARCOS, the Anglo-Russian Cooperative Society, founded in 1920 for trading purposes, at 49 Moorgate Road. It was the same old scenario: a search, abusive behaviour, and then to top it, rupture of diplomatic relations. On June 7, word was received from Warsaw of the murder of Pyotr Voikov, the Soviet envoy.

Meetings rolled across the country, speakers stigmatising the killer and his patrons. Excitement also reigned at the Foreign Commissariat. Its Komsomols gathered for a meeting, while their leaders went to Litvinov for advice. An old Party member, he would know what they should do.

He heard their excited questions, and wondered what he would say to them. Vorovsky had been killed a short time before, and now Pyotr Voikov. Who would be next? He said:

"You must never forget that you are diplomats. But neither must you ever forget that you are also Komsomols."

The Komsomols took a few red banners and marched in a procession, singing revolutionary songs. Outside the Polish Embassy they stopped, and stood silently, their red banners waving in the breeze.

The Party's Central Committee and Central Control Commission called a joint plenum on July 29, 1927, to discuss the international situation. "Current international affairs," its resolution said, "are marked first of all by the exceedingly strained relations between imperialist Britain and the proletarian Soviet Union, on the one hand, and imperialism's armed intervention in China, on the other. The threat of a counter-revolutionary war against the USSR is now the biggest problem of all. The contradictions between the USSR and the capitalist countries surrounding it are growing sharper, though this does not rule out some single improvement of relations here or there."

The imperialist efforts to build a united anti-Soviet front were

countered by Soviet peace moves. The 4th session of the Preparatory Commission for the Disarmament Conference was about to open in Geneva. Litvinov was sent there as leader of the Soviet delegation.

The Preparatory Commission had been set up at the end of 1925, but the USSR refused to attend the previous three sessions held in Switzerland because that country had failed to react to the killing of Vorovsky. Now due apologies had been tendered, and the Soviet government felt free to send a delegation. Litvinov, its head, was accompanied by its member, Lunacharsky.

The situation in Geneva was a complicated one. It was the seat of the League of Nations. Intrigues were plotted against the USSR.

On the eve of his departure, Litvinov invited correspondents to his office, and set forth the Soviet position: the Soviet delegation would go to Geneva with its own programme. It would consider those who worked in the same direction as allies. One of its objectives was to call the attention of the commission to the need for establishing truly effective guarantees of peace. It would combat attempts at distracting the delegates with third-ranking issues and fruitless resolutions, or attempts at making the commission an instrument of one state or a group of states.

On November 23, 1927, the Soviet delegation left for Geneva. The world press reacted with interest. The French *Le Temps* described Litvinov's statement as "astoundingly daring". The *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* commented that some British and French newspapers were displeased with the line-up of the Soviet delegation; they feared two things: a Soviet disarmament programme that neither Britain nor France could countenance, and an attempt at renewing Soviet-British relations. The *Kreuzzeitung*, mouthpiece of the German nationalists, wrote that a new player was stepping on to the disarmament stage in the person of the USSR, whom all were awaiting with tension, and the foes of disarmament with certain misgivings.

Litvinov's person was accorded considerable space in the papers. They recalled his years in Britain, his negotiations with the English and the Allies in Copenhagen, his mission in Sweden, and the part he played in Genoa, in the Hague, and at the Moscow Disarmament Conference. They wondered what tactics he would adopt in Geneva. *Der Tag*, a German daily, reported that Litvinov was crossing the plans of those who had called the session by demanding a general debate on questions of disarmament. And, it amplified, he would probably succeed after some preliminary diplomatic jockeying. Chamberlain would hardly be able to avoid contacts with Litvinov. Interesting diplomatic talks were in the offing, the paper commented, if Litvinov's tactics succeeded. And, it added, there was really no stopping Litvinov.



The journey to Switzerland was unsafe. The so-called Freiburg group of counter-revolutionary émigrés threatened to kill Litvinov and Lunacharsky if they set foot in Geneva. But there was no mishap. True, the railway car in which the Soviet diplomats travelled was literally infested with plainclothesmen. The time of the delegation's arrival was kept secret. Still, a crowd of people gathered at the railway station as the train pulled in. With flowers.

The press reported what it described as an unpleasant surprise for Litvinov: émigré Kubaloff had started an anti-Soviet paper in Geneva, timing its first issue to coincide with Litvinov's arrival.

On the first night, Litvinov and Lunacharsky vanished, saying nothing to anyone. Each went his own way. Without a guard, for none had come with them. Besides, if there had been a guard, the two would still have slipped away. The others were worried that night, for nobody knew where the two had gone.

They went to the places they had frequented in years gone by. Litvinov approached the house where he had lived. He wanted to go inside, but it was late. So he stalked off to the house where the *Iskra* printshop had been. Time had spared it. Litvinov was magnetised, and would not leave—until he heard footsteps, and turned round.

He saw Lunacharsky.

"I was sure you'd come," Litvinov said quietly.

"And I was sure I'd meet you here."

They stood beside the old house for some time. Then they walked off along the Rhone embankment towards the hills. In the distance were the glaciers of the Valais Alps. Lunacharsky recalled a few lines of poetry:

*"I see the mountain peaks again..."*

Then he recited *Faustus* in German.

Litvinov took him by the arm:

"It's time we went home."

On November 30, the first sitting of the commission gathered for the initial battle between Litvinov and his practised adversaries.

In the *Pravda*, Lunacharsky produced an adroit sketch of the main personalities at the Geneva forum:

"Take Chairman Loudon, the Dutch minister in Paris, a handsome elderly person of typically Anglo-Saxon appearance, leaning with some impatience on his chairman's hammer. And beside him the characteristic head and lean face of secretary Madariaga, the spitting image of the ascetic friars portrayed by Francisco de Zurbaran, the Spanish artist."

A curious point: Madariaga, with whom Litvinov broke lances

more than once in Geneva, had been the latter's pupil. Years ago, in London, Litvinov had taught him Russian.

But back to Lunacharsky's sketch:

"Here's a visage of an entirely different order: the smiling countenance of Albert Thomas with its typically Russian traits. And one more Frenchman, one more Socialist, of approximately the same colouring and stature—Joseph Paul-Boncour, the League of Nations number one tenor, sitting at the table with the face of an actor beneath the thick, bluishly-curly grey head of hair.

"And there's the little, nondescript Beneš, a fine lawyer, the Greek who introduced at the League of Nations the refined knavery of the Athenian sophists.

"One of the most striking figures at the conference: a fairly corpulent old man whose every feature ... is strongly reminiscent of the gentlemen of Dickensian times. He is a deadly enemy of Soviet Russia, Mr. Ronald John McNeill, now Lord Cushendun, leader of the British delegation."

Certainly, the audience waited with bated breath for the head of the Soviet delegation to speak.

Litvinov was deeply conscious of what he had to accomplish. It was essential for the nations of the world to learn of the Soviet declaration, which covered a lot of ground concerning disarmament. Hundreds of newspaper correspondents had come, and it would be a good thing if they reported the concrete Soviet peace proposals.

A serious problem arose at the very outset. By the rules of procedure, a delegation that participated in a session for the first time, must speak first. But Litvinov learned that Chairman Loudon had given way to pressure from Lord Cushendun and his supporters, and would deny him the floor. He would set the ball rolling at once with a discussion of last year's draft convention submitted by the same Lord Cushendun.

Could Litvinov count on anyone's support? Possibly the German delegate's. The Rapallo spirit was there, after all. And Litvinov went to see Count von Bernstorff. They spoke eye to eye for an hour, and the German finally promised he would move for the Soviet representative to be given the floor. At the last moment, however, he went back on his word. Opening the sitting, Loudon declared that Count von Bernstorff had suggested they begin the second reading of the old disarmament convention without further delay.

The Soviet declaration, it seemed, would not reach the ears of the public. That would not do, and Litvinov acted. He asked Loudon why he was going against the accepted procedure. For hadn't he, Litvinov, whose country was represented at the conference for the first time, the right to speak?

Loudon said once more that Count von Bernstorff had proposed that they begin by reading the convention. Litvinov looked the Count straight in the face, and asked:

"Did you propose that?"

The Count, a little confused, mumbled that he had made no such proposal.

"In that case," Litvinov said, "I have the floor."

He walked to the rostrum.

Loudon hesitated, was about to object, but in the end murmured that Maxim Litvinov, head of the Soviet delegation, would speak.

Lunacharsky and the rest of the Soviet delegation watched the proceedings with worried mien. Yet Litvinov was there, behind the rostrum, and had begun reading the Soviet declaration.

"Loudon's trick had failed," *Pravda* wrote on December 1, 1927, "thanks to Litvinov's energetic action." The declaration is stirringly relevant now as well, at the end of the 20th century.

"The Government of the USSR believes," Litvinov read, "there are no grounds to expect that the reasons which give rise to armed conflicts can be eliminated in the conditions of the capitalist system. Militarism and naval arming are, in substance, a natural consequence of capitalism. And their growth only aggravates the contradictions and gigantically accelerates the potentially hidden conflicts, inevitably precipitating armed collisions."

Litvinov heaped incisive criticism on the many years of talk about disarmament. The Soviet government was aware, he said, that the nations wanted peace. That was precisely why it had accepted the invitation to take part in the Preparatory Commission. By doing so, it was demonstrating its desire to live in peace with all nations, and wanted to determine the true intentions of the other countries.

Litvinov continued:

"In our time the threat of new wars breaking out is no longer hypothetical. We are not the only ones who think so. The same fears were recently expressed by many authoritative statesmen in the capitalist countries. The breath of impending war is felt everywhere. If war is to be averted, we must all act."

Those words would circle the Earth. There was applause. There were startled cries. Now no one would be able to hush up the Soviet peace declaration. On December 2, *Pravda* would report: "Litvinov's speech was heard with extraordinary attention... It is commonly believed that Litvinov's speech at the very beginning of the conference was a tactical Soviet victory."

The Western delegations had no choice but to discuss the Soviet

declaration. Lord Cushendun took the floor. His country, he said, had already disarmed. There was laughter from the Soviet delegation. Other delegates, too, were unable to hide their smiles.

Lord Cushendun did his utmost to block any discussion of the Soviet declaration. After some backstage manoeuvring, it was decided to discuss the date of the next session. Litvinov spoke several times, expanding on points of the Soviet declaration. He suggested calling the next session on January 10, 1928. And backstage whispering began all over again. Lord Cushendun admitted that Litvinov was in his rights to make the proposal, and said he was even prepared to second him. Thereupon he spoke against haste. And the discussion continued. The 5th session of the Preparatory Commission was finally scheduled on March 15. Litvinov said at that rate the current generation would never see the beginning of disarmament. But, he added, he would certainly come on March 15.

On December 5, 1927, Litvinov's railway car pulled out of Geneva. The press comments were nothing less than lively. The *Japan Times* wrote vexedly that the whole world had responded to Litvinov's declaration, which, it added, made the biggest impression in such countries as, say, India. The French papers noted reluctantly that Litvinov's proposals had not been rejected, their discussion was merely postponed.

Meanwhile, the train raced for Moscow. The 15th Congress of the Communist Party had already opened, and Litvinov was expected to address it about the outcome of the Geneva forum.

He was given the floor on December 14. At the morning session, the congress discussed the report of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars on the first five-year plan. Litvinov spoke at the end of the sitting. In his emotional address, he said, "Comrades, thanks to a fortunate twist of fate I am happy to be making my first communication here about the work of the Soviet delegation at the Preparatory Disarmament Commission."

Litvinov set forth the history of the disarmament problem, spoke of the attitude of various countries, and of the backstage currents. His communication, which abounded in effervescent humour and biting sarcasm, was punctuated by laughter and applause.

"We know perfectly well," he said, among other things, "that in place of universal disarmament certain quarters would like nothing better than for the world's only Soviet state to destroy all its arms, so that they could then make short work of it. But they won't have it their way. We have always said, and now say, that we are ready to disarm provided the other countries do the same. And if the capitalist states are not sure we mean it, there is a good way for them to test



our sincerity, that is, join our programme. If they fail to do so, they will show the world that the only country that can propose complete disarmament and an end to wars is the Soviet Union."

Litvinov did not leave Moscow until March 1928. He still had his home on the Moskva embankment opposite the Kremlin. But a new house for Foreign Commissariat staff was already going up in the region of Krasniye Vorota, and Litvinov intended to move there. The building on the embankment would be turned over to one of the foreign embassies.

Impatiently, Litvinov waited. The children were growing up. They were already attending school. The place on the embankment was not very convenient. Diplomatic receptions occurred there frequently. This interfered with normal living. The endless coming and going of foreign and Soviet diplomats, and the general hotel atmosphere distracted the children from their school work. Once, at a reception, Litvinov's son scrambled between the guests' legs from under the table, and said blandly, "Don't be scared, it's me, Misha."

Ten-year-old Misha and his classmate had found a hiding place under the table long before the reception began, and sat there quietly for several hours in order to pop up before the astonished guests.

"Have you done your homework?" Litvinov asked his favourite question.

"Yes."

"Then, off to bed."

And the diplomatic reception continued.

As a rule, Litvinov spent his evenings with the family. He liked going to the pictures, to concerts, and exhibitions. A friendship sprang up with actors of the Moscow Art Theatre. After a performance, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, the stage director, would sometimes ask Litvinov what he thought of it. Litvinov either refused to comment, or said he personally liked the play. He was afraid to impose his opinion.

The winter of 1928 passed quickly, full of cares. The beginning of the industrialisation drive created additional problems. People had come from abroad to help out. They had jobs at building projects, and were also modernising going concerns and factories. Foreign tourists arrived, too. The Foreign Commissariat suggested that special shops for foreigners should be set up. Soon, such shops—the Torgsin chain—appeared. This was a new source of foreign currency.

The 6th session of the Preparatory Disarmament Commission was to open on March 15. Presumably, the Soviet delegation would stay

in Geneva longer than the first time. A larger group of experts came along. Boris Stein, who had acquitted himself splendidly in Genoa and the Hague, was appointed counsellor, and Langovoy, a former tsarist army officer, knowledgeable and refined, was military adviser. Vladimir Yegoryev, one of the most experienced Foreign Commissariat officials, came along as the delegation's legal adviser, and another Yegoryev, his namesake, as naval expert. The technical staff was of modest size—two stenographers, a typist, a secretary, and a cipher clerk. Konstantin Umansky, a TASS correspondent, accompanied the delegation. Litvinov had a high opinion of him not only for his journalistic assets, but also his diplomatic skills. After a while, indeed, Umansky was appointed chief of the Foreign Commissariat's Press Department.

As usual, the delegation stopped at a modest hotel. Its members and the technical staff had a room each. They ate together in the hotel dining-room. The menu was the same for all—from Litvinov down to the technical secretary.

The situation in Switzerland was as strained as before. Anything was liable to happen. Litvinov found a way out: he made arrangements for his Swiss friends to guard the Soviet delegation round the clock. Besides, they obtained a motorcar for his use.

In their leisure hours, everybody gathered in Litvinov's room, that is, if he was not busy preparing for the next sitting. There was usually general merriment, punctuated by political or literary disputes. The first Soviet novels saw the light of day in the mid-twenties, such as Fyodor Gladkov's *Cement*, Dmitry Furmanov's *Mutiny* and *Chapayev*, and Anna Karavayeva's *Timber Mill*. Mikhail Bulgakov's writings had begun to appear. All this was arousing keen interest.

On Saturdays, in keeping with the local weekend tradition, the Soviet colony went on picnics. Invariably accompanied by their Swiss friends, they returned at dusk on Sundays and spent the rest of the evening discussing current fiction in the tiny drawing-room.

Even before the Soviet delegation left for Geneva, Litvinov had, on the government's instructions, sent the Secretary-General of the League of Nations a draft convention on immediate, complete, and universal disarmament. It was based on the fundamental principles that had been submitted by the Soviet delegation at the previous session of the Preparatory Commission in November 1927.

On March 19, Litvinov spoke at the forum for the first time. In the intervening period, he said, the Soviet delegation had received hundreds of letters from all over the world, backing the idea of disarmament. He added that an address he had received upon coming to Ge-

neva, was signed by 124 international organisations which backed the Soviet project. Now, he added, it was high time to go from words to deeds. Since its inauguration, the League of Nations had already held 120 sessions on disarmament, and submitted 111 resolutions for general discussion. Yet matters hadn't moved an inch. If the idle talk continued, the idea of disarmament would be discredited.

"The Soviet government means business," Litvinov said. "It is building an immense country along entirely new lines ... but could never accomplish that job if it did not treat the problem of peace in a most serious, purposeful, and sincere manner. Maintaining peace is, indeed, the cornerstone of all its policies."

Litvinov knew, of course, that he could not count on any of the delegations to support him. Lord Cushendun was completely in charge, and would not allow the Soviet plan to pass. The delegate of the reactionary Polish government would be sure to attack it, and the same could be expected of the Italian delegate, the American, and, for that matter, of all the others.

And Litvinov was not wrong. A battle flared up over the Soviet proposal. The attack was headed by Lord Cushendun, who had rallied all the anti-Soviet forces at the session. He criticised the Soviet project, doing his best to live up to the directives he had received from London. Lunacharsky commented, "Sweat poured from the massive forehead down the dignitary's fat jowls. One of the comrades on the Soviet delegation observed wryly, 'Now the boot's on the other foot—instead of making proletarians sweat over their work, the proletarians are making the Lord sweat.'"

A fitting reply had to be made to Cushendun's philippic. Lunacharsky recalled: "The first delegate of the Soviet Land, Comrade Litvinov, was composing his retort, translating it into English, checking the text of the French translation, while our experts were making inquiries, so that every single, even secondary, remark of Lord Cushendun's, the adversary's chief orator, should be given due retort. The technical staff worked tirelessly, making copies of the speech in both languages for distribution to delegates and journalists."

"Hearty, strenuous work, and happy nights abounding in hard work that did not stop until dawn... As Comrade Litvinov read his retort aloud, with the Soviet arguments rising like bastions, the enthusiasm of our delegation kept mounting."

"And the effect was what we had expected it to be."

"Following insignificant speakers with their insignificant and reverent statements that they were in complete accord with the British delegate, Comrade Litvinov was finally given the floor. People in the hall shuffled their feet and held their breath in expectation."

"Everybody listened with rapt attention: the presidium, the personnel of the commission, journalists and guests..."

"Now and then, even though hostile, the auditorium was unable to withhold its laughter or a gesture of surprise. The interest in what the Soviet speaker was saying increased all the time. It was funny to watch those at whom Litvinov aimed his darts: the Lord's visage had taken on a strangely childish look; he had opened his mouth a little, and his eyes were fixed on Litvinov; from time to time his cheeks flushed red."

"After Litvinov ended his speech, a commotion broke out. For some minutes the interpreter could not begin the French translation. Congratulations poured in, some from quite unexpected quarters."

In the morning, Litvinov received a coded cable from Moscow. "Top quarters feel your speech was excellent," it said. The cable came from the Politbureau.

The 6th session of the Preparatory Commission adjourned at the end of March. Litvinov left for home. On April 21, he spoke at the 3rd session of the USSR Central Executive Committee, reporting on what the Soviet delegation had accomplished in Geneva.

His report was a long one. The only thing he did not speak about were his altercations with Lord Cushendun and Co. He spoke of the alignment of forces, the power balance in the world, and of the unproductiveness of the League of Nations and its agencies, which acted as a screen for an arms race. It was probably the first time that he spoke so explicitly of the preparations for another war, and called for a build-up of Soviet defences.

"We must take note of the recent worldwide increase of the very same militarist tendencies that had precipitated a world war in 1914," he said. "The proceedings at the 6th session of the Preparatory Commission were quite clearly a sign of the same militarism that had preceded and accompanied the past war. Pacifist rhetoric about security guarantees and non-aggression pacts is no more than a cover for the same kind of political capers that had highlighted prewar diplomacy."

The Soviet government's accent on peace would not be affected by that sort of thing, Litvinov went on to say. So long as the other countries were intractable on the question of disarmament, the USSR would, of course, closely follow all enemy moves. "We have always declared, and do so now," he added, "that the main Soviet goal is to secure a peaceful setting for our construction at home without in any way prejudicing the national interests of any other country."



The League of Nations, he said, may think complete disarmament was an unattainable ideal or something the world should approach at a snail's pace over centuries or millennia. The Soviet Union, for its part, would continue to strive for that ideal today, in the context of current politics. It would continue to work for its prompt achievement, just as it worked for and achieved the other ideals of the working people all over the world.

The Central Executive Committee endorsed the Soviet delegation's conduct of affairs in Geneva.

It was ten years in May 1928 since Chicherin was made People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. That day's *Pravda* observed that his work was "an indissoluble part of the history of the Soviet Union's struggle against the country's imperialist encirclement".

In September, Chicherin's health deteriorated. On his doctor's advice, he went for treatment to Germany. No one could have known then that, in effect, he was leaving the diplomatic service for good.

Litvinov was made Acting People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs.

Even before Chicherin's leaving, Litvinov had been given the mission to secure the Soviet Union's accession to the Kellogg Pact. That was no easy task, if only for the fact that the Pact had been conceived as an anti-Soviet action.

The Kellogg Pact, a multilateral act that renounced war as an instrument of national policy, had been at the centre of Western diplomatic activity at the end of 1927. Its anti-Soviet thrust was observed at the time by Chicherin, who said to members of the press, "The non-inclusion of the Soviet Government among the participants of the talks leads us to believe that the real aim of the initiators is to make the pact an instrument for isolating the Soviet Union."

Soviet diplomats followed the backstage negotiations related to the pact most closely. This was done by Litvinov, who, as Chicherin told the journalists, had produced a summary analysis of Kellogg's pact proposal, and shown that renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy was in this case but another name for war preparations as an instrument of worldwide counter-revolution.

But the Soviet attitude towards the pact changed at the end of the summer of 1928. Newspapers in Germany, France, and the United States called for the Soviet Union's accession. This would change matters. And since Chicherin had in his aforesaid talk with members of the press given to understand that the USSR would not be found wanting if the Western powers invited it to join, the Soviet Union's accession to the Kellogg Pact was now no more than a technicality. And it was added proof in the eyes of the public that the USSR was

prepared to resolve any problem constructively, provided this helped to shore up the peace.

Four days after the French invitation had arrived, Litvinov set forth the Soviet government's opinion of the Kellogg Pact. It was far from perfect, he observed. Its wording on the renunciation of war was not clear enough and open to different interpretations. Worse, there was no commitment to disarm.

"Still," he said, "since the Pact does objectively impose certain obligations upon the powers in face of public opinion, and since it offers the Soviet Government a fresh opportunity to raise before all its signatories the question of disarmament, which is crucial for peace, and whose implementation is the sole guarantee against war, the Soviet Government herewith declares its consent to accede to it."

On September 6, Litvinov handed the French Ambassador a declaration he had signed that the Soviet Union was joining the Kellogg Pact. But that was only the first step. The Kellogg Pact, as stipulated in Article 3, would not enter into force until all ratification instruments were submitted. And it turned out at the end of 1928 that none of the signatories had yet ratified it. The treaty could well become non-obligatory and stillborn. Litvinov stepped in. He offered Poland, the Baltic states, and Romania to hasten the Pact's entry into force. On February 9, 1929, the ensuing talks culminated in the publication of the famous Moscow Protocol (also known as the Litvinov protocol), ratifying the Kellogg Pact. Turkey, Persia, and Lithuania ratified it a little later.

This was a triumph for Soviet diplomacy. The world press spoke of Litvinov's adroit handling of the matter, and of his having snatched the initiative from the Western states.

After the successful signing of the Moscow Protocol, the Foreign Commissariat set out to restore diplomatic relations with Britain. It was clearly sinking in that the break with the USSR was a costly thing for Britain. An influential group of Conservative businessmen suggested sending a delegation of British industrialists to Moscow. On March 2, 1929, the Associated Press correspondent in Moscow asked Litvinov for an interview on this score. Litvinov replied that the Soviet government was not averse to discussing the most desirable ways of enlivening trade between the two countries, and would therefore receive the British industrialists. They arrived early in April, and spent nearly three weeks in the Soviet Union. Important commercial issues were discussed.

In mid-April, Litvinov left for the next session of the Preparatory Commission in Geneva, and stayed there until the middle of May.

The negotiations with Britain concerning normalisation of relations had been started, and now events had to be allowed to take their natural course. Discussions in Geneva went on until the beginning of May 1929. The commission rejected the principle of equitable reductions of all types of weapons, and went on to a second reading of its own draft convention of 1927. Litvinov intervened 22 times. Sometimes he spoke two or three times a day, urging all concerned to reduce all types of armaments and secure their numerical cut and qualitative restriction.

Lord Cushendun summoned additional experts and advisers from London, who helped him draw up answers to the Soviet delegation.

The demagogical utterances of the U.S. representative, Hugh Simons Gibson, in support of the disarmament principle were, in effect, a hindrance to the adoption of the Soviet proposals. At long last, the session of the Preparatory Commission was carried over to the following year, and Litvinov returned to Moscow.

The world situation was uneasy. New provocations were occurring on the Chinese Eastern Railway. Diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and China were ruptured. The long-drawn-out negotiations with the Chinese authorities through mediators, and the Soviet government's goodwill during the conflict, failed to halt the hand of the Chinese warlords. The provocations continued. Finally, the Chinese went over to direct territorial seizures. On November 17, units of the Soviet Special Far Eastern Army mounted a counter-offensive. This brought the warlords to their senses. On November 28, Litvinov cabled the head of the Mukden government, demanding that the state of affairs on the Chinese Eastern Railway should be officially restored to what it had been before the conflict on the basis of the Peking and Mukden treaties of 1924. The Chinese accepted the terms, and the situation in the region returned to normal. The Khabarovsk Protocol, settling the Sino-Soviet conflict on the CER, was signed on December 22.

In December, too, the Foreign Commissariat completed its talks with Britain. Diplomatic relations were restored.

But new troubles occurred in 1930. Prompted from outside, Mexico broke off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. There was unrest along the Finnish border, and all kinds of incidents occurred in the Far East. In Warsaw, White emigrés tried to blow up the Soviet Mission building. The Soviets had been in power for well over twelve years, but the capitalist world simply would not swallow this bitter pill.

Chicherin returned from Germany in January. His long cure and recuperation had brought back some energy, but he was still unwell,

and depressed by his inability to devote himself to business. On July 21, 1930, the USSR Central Executive Committee complied with his request to step down. A brilliant diplomat and statesman who had played an outstanding part in the history of the Soviet state, he retired from the political scene with his reputation unmarred.

One day in mid-July, Litvinov was chairing a sitting of the Commissariat's Collegium. Krestinsky, Karakhan, Stomoniakov, and a few other leading diplomats, attended. In the middle of the discussions, Litvinov was summoned to the Kremlin. He left, saying he would be back soon. He returned some ninety minutes later, and said:

"I was at a sitting of the Politbureau. They have appointed a new commissar for us."

Stomoniakov asked who it was.

"They appointed me," Litvinov replied.

There were congratulations, and some handshaking. Then a photograph of all those present was taken.

On July 25, the papers published the Central Executive Committee decision appointing Litvinov People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. The Commissariat's Collegium would consist of Nikolai Krestinsky, Litvinov's first deputy, Lev Karakhan, his second deputy, and Boris Stomoniakov.

Friends, Party comrades, diplomats, and the public in general welcomed Litvinov's appointment. Letters came from industrial workers and from artists, actors, and writers. V. V. Luzhsky, a distinguished Moscow Art Theatre actor, wrote: "I congratulate you most heartily on your important and responsible appointment. I hail you as one of the most considerate and responsive people in high office."

That day Litvinov held his first press conference for foreign correspondents in his new capacity. The Litvinovs had moved into a new flat—three little rooms above a garage in the Foreign Commissariat's detached house on Spiridonovka Street. It was a warm July day. Foreign correspondents made themselves comfortable on the lawn, and a few sat on the porch. Litvinov, who installed himself on the porch, asked if they had any questions. The correspondents were mostly English-speaking, and Litvinov communicated with them directly, without an interpreter.

"Are you pleased with your appointment, Mr. Litvinov?"

"Yes, very pleased, though my job won't be easy. The rich experience of my brilliant predecessor, Georgy Chicherin, splendid diplomat and statesman, will be a constant example for me to emulate."

One correspondent asked if the new appointment would lead to changes in Soviet foreign policy.



No, Litvinov replied. And not only because he had in his ten years with Chicherin participated in working out foreign policy, but also, and above all, because any change in leadership had none of the implications in the Soviet Union that it had in capitalist states.

"In capitalist countries," he explained, "changes in cabinet posts are in most cases the result of a struggle between political parties and reflect the class interests those parties happen to represent. Sometimes, they reflect adjustments to suit changes in the general situation, and even to suit outside influences. In the country where workers and peasants are in power, foreign policy depends on the will of the worker-peasant masses as expressed in decisions of the Soviet government."

"What can you say of further relations with the Western countries?"

"The Soviet Union will do its utmost to live in peace, and to do business with all countries. In short, we'll carry on our old, tried and true foreign policy, which we know to be right and to conform with the interests of all nations, and also with the growing power of the Soviet Union."

A week before his appointment as Foreign Commissar, Litvinov had marked his 54th birthday. He was in his prime. He would accomplish many things, and endure many things.

But in those days he was obviously in a good mood. Gratefully, he received the congratulations of his friends. A fatherly letter went off to his son and daughter, who were in a summer camp in Zvenigorod, near Moscow.

His daughter replied: "Daddy, you were deputychicherin, now you're selfchicherin."

## Chapter 7

### NEW OBJECTIVES

The international situation was changing. The time of bourgeois pacifism was quickly ending.

At the 16th Congress of the Communist Party a thorough analysis was made of the world situation. The partial stabilisation of capitalism in the earlier period was eroding. The contradictions of the imperialist system were growing more acute, and the threat of new imperialist wars increased. The situation of the working class and the mass of the working people all over the capitalist world was growing worse. Bourgeois-democratic states were going fascist.

"The aggravation of all the contradictions of the imperialist system," the Congress noted, "occurs alongside an aggravation of contradictions between the USSR and the surrounding capitalist world."

The world bourgeoisie was seething with venomous hatred for the world's only socialist state, and dreaded its revolutionising influence. This prompted the capitalist world to organise economic blockades, to combat Soviet exports, slander the Soviets in the press, and prepare assiduously for a war against the Soviet Union.

Certainly, no one could have said at the time that a second world war would begin nine years later. But it was all too clear that the 1930s would see a chain of tragic events.

Nothing cardinal changed at the Foreign Commissariat after Litvinov's appointment as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He reduced his personal staff a little, and distributed the redundant personnel, depending on preferences, among the respective departments. Night work had long since ceased. As in Chicherin's time, Litvinov arrived at his office at 9 a.m. sharp, and left at 6 p.m. Krebstinsky and Stomaniakov, it is true, would sometimes work later. Karakhan was also liable to, but more rarely.

As usual, Litvinov started the day by looking through the mail. He read all the letters, both official and personal. In the early 30s, the number of personal letters increased. People were following their country's foreign policy. They rejoiced at its successes and at the growing prestige of the Soviet Union. They suggested solutions, ex-

pressed gratitude, wished health and success. Litvinov replied to the letters himself. If he asked his secretary to do so, he would look through her drafts.

Then Litvinov received the department heads. One at a time, punctually as scheduled. On fixed days, there was the Collegium meeting.

Here is the evidence of Yevgeni Rubinin, former Soviet ambassador to Belgium. It reveals some important traits of Litvinov's character:

"Litvinov was incredibly scrupulous. It was as though he shovelled through the case he was dealing with from top to bottom, making a profound and considered examination. This inspired reverence. His foreign colleagues may have disagreed with him, but no one ever treated him with disrespect despite the abyss of ideological differences. He never left a point unproved. His was a creative, thoughtful, ever searching personality. And his conduct of affairs contributed to the Soviet Union's growing prestige. At conferences, he was always at the centre of attention. He provoked fury among German and Italian fascists, but they were always compelled to take everything he said in full earnest."

Human passions and frailties were not foreign to Litvinov. That is quite clear if you look at the various sides of his life. Yet he was an extraordinarily orderly person, a man of discipline. He might have argued vehemently upholding his point of view, even at Politbureau sittings, which occurred often enough, but once a decision was taken he always carried it out, and required all Foreign Commissariat staff to do the same. One never heard the word "discipline" at the Foreign Commissariat, but tight and rigid discipline reigned there all the same, confirming the truly Bolshevik training of the personnel.

The reports the department chiefs made to Litvinov every morning, took ten minutes each. Litvinov listened, reacting from time to time with his sacramental grunt, though it was always difficult to understand whether it was in approval or otherwise. He made his associates lay everything on the line, set out all their arguments, and then make their recommendations. On the following day, the respective department chief would be given a copy of Litvinov's letter to Stalin. Litvinov smiled, giving to understand that, you see, your recommendation has been accepted.

In early November 1930 Litvinov again went to Geneva. To attend the second half of the 6th session of the Preparatory Commission on Disarmament. Lunacharsky came along once more as a member of the delegation. The relationship of the two men was ever more close. Each knew what the other had on his mind.

Lunacharsky described the atmosphere at the session:

"It was as though there had been no hard eighteen months since the first half of the 6th session in the spring of 1929. The Soviet delegation walked along the same streets, the same corridors, to the same glass hall, where the same order reigned, and the faces, too, were all nearly the same."

To be sure, Lunacharsky added, the tables were arranged a little differently, and all the delegations, to avoid injury, were seated in alphabetical order.

"The Polish delegate," he wrote, "was a general instead of Sokal, and the Turks had Munir Bey, their ambassador in Paris, instead of Tewfik Rushdi, etc. Count Bernstorff, with his closely shaved clever visage and the typically diplomatic parting of his hair; the cunning little Sato with his knavish little eyes; René Massigli with the manners of a senior shop's attendant offering tempting samples of silk; the pigeon-toed corpulent General de Marinis, who is nobody's fool, and the Athenian sophist Nicolaos Socrates Politis, his neck swathed in a scarf... And then the most eminent new figure—Robert Cecil, the Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, his face yellow and wrinkled, his manners un-English, a bit too jumpy. Genial in appearance, he resembles a large bird, his back hunched. His nose protruding altogether like a big hook. Then add his long-fingered hands that are continuously bunched like the claws of a bird. From time to time, the claws touch the nose, as though Cecil is sharpening his beak. I've seen old crows do it. He's a liberal, a humanist, and a neo-Christian... Then, our incongruous chairman, Mr. Loudan, and his aide, the Greek Agnidas."

So much for Lunacharsky's impressions. The events unfolded as they had at previous sessions. Loudan expressed his gratification over the successes marked up at past sessions. He admitted that the times were "more troubled than ever", but said there would be no debate. That meant the Soviet proposal would not be discussed. Litvinov came to grips with him. He described the situation and the events that had occurred in the eighteen months since the session was adjourned. He insisted that they discuss disarmament.

Loudan could not hold himself. He interrupted Litvinov, said the speaker was straying from the subject of the conference. Litvinov ignored Loudan's remark, and continued to speak. Loudan reacted by telling the interpreters to stop translating Litvinov's speech into French (Litvinov was speaking English). Lunacharsky recalled the noise in the hall. The journalists walked out in protest. Litvinov made the most of the situation. Turning to Loudan, he said: "I thank the chairman for heightening interest in my speech by forbidding its



translation. But why has he picked French? Does he think the French-speaking delegates are not old enough to hear such speeches?"

There was laughter in the hall.

Lunacharsky wrote: "Certainly, Comrade Litvinov's speech was the centrepiece... The result was good. The possibility that the three main clauses would be revised, was left open. A truly stirring Bolshevik speech has been delivered. The sympathies, even if temporary, are on our side. Even bourgeois journalists congratulated Maxim Litvinov."

The second half of the 6th session lasted until December 9, 1930. The discussions showed that the power balance had not changed. The Western powers were determined to obfuscate the concrete Soviet proposals with meaningless talk of disarmament.

Litvinov decided to leave Geneva. He went to Milan, where he met the Italian Foreign Minister. They would discuss Soviet-Italian relations. Meanwhile, Lunacharsky, who stayed in Geneva, handed Loudan a letter and memorandum of the Soviet delegation on December 4, elucidating the Soviet point of view on various sections of the draft convention. Loudan refused to attach the texts to the commission's report. The Soviet proposals were not reflected in the adopted draft.

Millions of people wondered if it was worth while wasting time and effort on all these sessions, and on the world conference that was due to open in two years. Lunacharsky was inclined to disagree: "Those who say the conference is a lot of useless bother, are quite wrong. To begin with, we must not expect it to be entertaining. Every piece of work calls for tenacity and patience. The work we are doing in Geneva is important. It is a battle for public opinion against bourgeois policies of all hues and calibres. Is it not indicative that 1,500 pacifist societies have for the first time in the history of the Petition Chamber sided with our proposal and used all the arguments of Comrade Litvinov. That means we have created a left pacifism. Our delegation in Geneva is the vanguard of the great world proletariat, and is fighting day after day for the cause we serve."

The assessment of the world situation by the 16th Congress of the Communist Party was confirmed by the course of events in various parts of the world. In 1931, the situation in the Far East deteriorated once again. The Japanese militarists stepped up their anti-Soviet campaign, and were backed by reactionary circles in the United States. The latter were eager to drive a wedge between the Soviet Union and Japan.

To be sure, the events did not entirely follow the Washington scenario. On September 19, 1931, the Japanese went into action in

Manchuria. The more far-sighted American statesmen saw this as the beginning of a Japanese expansionist drive into other parts of Asia "of special interest" for U.S. business. But ruling quarters in the United States and Britain took no action. They hoped Japan would be bogged down in a war against China, and would then, inevitably, come to grips with the Soviet Union. The United States abstained from accusing Japan of breaching the Kellogg Pact. Japan, the aggressor, and China, its victim, were put on the same footing. The League of Nations, too, did nothing in particular, except calling on the sides, that is, the aggressor and his victim, not to expand the conflict. On December 10, 1931, the League of Nations set up the so-called Committee of Five, which was to study the situation on the spot. Lord Lytton, ex-Viceroy of India, was put at its head.

In the meantime, Japan overran Manchuria. The Japanese advance to the Soviet border was a distinct threat. Swift and firm diplomatic action was called for.

At this time, Litvinov devoted most of his attention to the Far Eastern problem. He moved to strengthen the Soviet position in the Far East. His actions encouraged the liberation forces, and prompted China to restore diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The two countries concluded a non-aggression treaty. The understanding was reached in June 1932, after Litvinov's talks with the Chinese representative at the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva. But even before relations with China were restored, the Soviet diplomatic service, which had followed the activities of the Lytton Commission closely, took a series of steps that torpedoed the West's anti-Soviet intrigues and destroyed the designs of channelling the Japanese aggression against the Soviet Union.

The Lytton Commission did not go to China, the theatre of the undeclared war, first, but to the United States and Japan. This was liable, indeed, to prompt Japan to mount fresh provocative actions against the Soviet Union. Not until March 1932 did the commission come to China, and not until April to Manchuria. Japan had long since installed itself in the Chinese Eastern Railway zone. Conflicts multiplied, and were fraught with dangerous consequences.

Litvinov submitted a set of proposals on Soviet policy in the Far East to the Party's Central Committee.

After talks with members of the Politbureau, which took several hours, Litvinov returned to the Foreign Commissariat, summoned Benedict Kozlovsky, who was in charge of Far Eastern affairs, and, laconically as usual, said, "Comrade Kozlovsky, start getting the papers ready. We are going to sell our share in the Chinese Eastern Railway to the Japanese."

The conflict with Japan, eagerly awaited in Western capitals, was thus averted. In 1935, the Chinese Eastern Railway question was finally settled. The Soviet Union's political situation in the Far East improved.

The early thirties were highlighted by two important events—the World Disarmament Conference and the Monetary and Economic Conference.

There was hardly any hope, even after the many years of preparation, that the Disarmament Conference would be successful. But true to its policy of peace, the Soviet Union continued its fight for disarmament. A few years later, at a ceremony on receiving the Order of Lenin, Litvinov would speak of the importance of that leading principle of the Soviet Union's Leninist foreign policy.

"We offered universal disarmament at the very first international conference we attended. We repeat this offer on every possible occasion... If we arm ourselves, it is not for any trial of strength with anyone. We do so to dampen all hope of impunity in a trial of strength against us. We have issued offer after offer to other countries concerning the best possible system of organising universal peace. I say universal because we want peace not only for ourselves, but also for other nations."

It was with this aim in mind that Litvinov went to Geneva again in February 1932. And again he was accompanied by Lunacharsky and a tight little group of experts and technical staff.

Agnessa Romm, a Foreign Commissariat stenographer who had been with Litvinov in Geneva on most of his visits, recalls: "We stayed in one boarding-house. Litvinov and Lunacharsky had the same rooms as we, the staff. We ate at the same table, and the meals were the same for all. It was a merry, close-knit company."

"At the World Disarmament Conference all of us had our hands full. As usual, Litvinov was cool, balanced, and considerate with us. In the evenings, he read the papers and magazines. He had no press assistant, and followed the press himself. He read English, German, and French papers, and leafed through the Italian and Spanish."

"If there was to be a sitting or an assembly, Litvinov would dictate the draft of his speech the night before. He did it with great care. If the speech was to be in English, he made the translation himself."

"In the evenings, we sometimes went to the pictures together. Litvinov was fond of the cinema and after seeing one film was not averse to seeing another if he had the time."

"Not all of us went to the receptions. We did not have the requisite

clothes. Our modest allowance was spent on a few tins of coffee or some other delicacy unavailable in Moscow in those days."

Geneva had looked forward to the arrival of the Soviet delegation. The capitalist world was gripped by crisis. The Soviet Union alone was making economic headway, building factories, with not a hint of unemployment. This enhanced its prestige. Litvinov received letters from many countries. People asked to be granted Soviet citizenship. Commercial firms offered textiles, machinery, foodstuffs, and other commodities. All requests and offers went to the appropriate government departments.

The popularity of the Soviet delegation was a bitter pill for the White émigrés to swallow. Litvinov was informed that terrorist acts were possible. He forbade members of the delegation to leave the house after dark. The Swiss authorities, he noted, were none too friendly.

Nearly all countries had sent representatives to the Disarmament Conference. But war preparations continued at full speed behind the scenes. Manchuria had been overrun. A war was in full swing in China. Mussolini was poised to attack Ethiopia. The situation in Germany was increasingly alarming. Adolf Hitler was conducting secret talks with Germany's financial and industrial tycoons. Power in the country was practically within his grasp.

What did the rest of Europe think of the revival of militarist Germany? U.S. Secretary of State Henry Stimson commented: "A defeatist spirit reigns across the world." Yes, defeatism in face of an exuberantly advancing fascism, we could add. France was afraid of the German militarism, but encouraged it despite its fears. Britain's policy was much the same. Political confusion and cabinet reshuffles marked Europe's political scene.

Germany was about to launch a colossal arms programme. Shortly before the conference, the bourgeois parties there had conducted a joint campaign "For German Equality in Armaments".

On February 2, 1932, the World Conference opened. Along with an incredibly large number of particular proposals, it was to examine the project of the Preparatory Commission, the Tardieu Plan submitted by France, and the Soviet proposals for complete disarmament or a substantial progressive proportional arms reduction, slightly altered in the light of preceding discussions.

But the opening speech by conference chairman Arthur Henderson was a clear indication that the big powers were not thinking of disarmament, but rather of arming. Naturally, Germany jumped at the chance. Chancellor Heinrich Brüning declared at the conference that Germany demanded equal rights and equal security. What this meant



was equality in arms or, in effect, Germany's rearmament.

On February 11 came Litvinov's turn to speak. He reminded the audience that the noises at the conference were accompanied by the noise of booming guns and exploding bombs. Any delay in disarmament, he added, would bring closer a worldwide war. "We face the problem of disarmament, which should be resolved without further delay," he said. He tore the Tardieu Plan to shreds, saying the League of Nations army it envisaged would be an obedient instrument in the hands of the West. He added:

"I leave aside the question of how the Soviet Union can be expected to entrust its security, and a part of its own troops, to an international organisation that consists mainly of countries which are obviously hostile and refuse to have any relations with it. In the circumstances, the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union will see such an international army as a threat to their country."

Step by step, Litvinov destroyed the hare-brained Western schemes. He set forth the goal of the Soviet Union in the clearest of terms: it was essential that there should be security against war.

Here are some of Lunacharsky's impressions:

"Litvinov's speech was heard with enormous and intense attention... It cast lights and shadows. In general, the press was again surprisingly favourable. The German papers praised his forceful criticism, his sensible restraint, the political depth of his speech. The Italian press, though it sidestepped what was completely indigestible for fascists, praised the speech in general, and its effective criticism of the French project in particular. More or less the same applies to the British press. The French press, as far as the official papers were concerned, was furious. Incapable of retorting in substance, it repeated slanders about Soviet militarism, while some papers took the easy road of criticising Litvinov's English. Mind you, it was the French and not the English who criticised his language. While the *Daily Herald* saw fit to praise Mr. Litvinov's excellent English.

"But the French press, too, was not of one mind. *L'Intransigeant*, for example, observed that, in truth, the clear, categorical, in places brazen and taunting speech of the Moscow delegate had made a tremendous impression. It was like a rock dropped into a fetid swamp."

Litvinov took the floor thrice on the main item on the agenda. Commenting on one of Litvinov's speeches, made on February 25, Lunacharsky wrote:

"In a short speech, strong as steel, Litvinov has again devastatingly motivated the correctness of the Soviet Union's basic point of view. The audience sat in morose silence." Litvinov's three speeches, he added, "are in fact powerful centres of attraction and obvious symp-

toms of the regrouping of forces that is still only vague but may one day proceed at a revolutionary pace."

The Soviet position elicited a response all over the world. Albert Einstein, Bertrand Russell, and other eminent scientists cabled Geneva, expressing admiration of the Soviet stand. A letter to the same effect arrived from Camilla Dreuvet, secretary of the International Women's League.

Litvinov replied to her: "My government, on whose behalf I have had the honour to defend the project of universal disarmament over the past five years, is firmly convinced and has enough proof that the idea is welcomed by most of mankind, irrespective of sex. Your letter is added proof that it is close to the hearts of the female half of humanity, which suffers the horrors of war not only directly, but also in agonising worry for husbands, sons, and brothers."

Although the proposal for general and complete disarmament had not been adopted and was, in fact, resisted by other governments, he added, the Soviet Union did not intend to give up. It would continue the fight for the only effective means of delivering humanity from the scourge of war and the burdens of militarism.

The Western powers went out of their way to spurn the Soviet proposals. An American plan appeared on the agenda in June 1932. Its author was President Herbert Hoover, who paraded his love of peace in anticipation of the coming elections. In formal terms, the U.S. project envisaged a 33 per cent reduction of all types of armaments. But it was so devised as to considerably weaken France, Britain, and Japan, and leave the U.S. army intact. Litvinov came out with concrete amendments to the U.S. project. The Soviet delegation, he said, believed it fair and politically desirable to cut the arms of the more powerful countries by 50 per cent.

The Soviet amendments were turned down. After lengthy negotiations, a new draft resolution appeared which was neither definite nor concrete as concerned disarmament. It was put to a vote. That was when Litvinov submitted a proposal that was long discussed thereafter in the lobby of the conference and in the world press. He suggested scrapping the principle of a general vote.

"After all," he said, "the economic relations of all delegations, and the related resolution, will not be judged on the basis of speeches and explications. They will be judged by how the delegations voted, for or against the resolution. It would be most deplorable if the voting created the impression that the conference had unanimously adopted this resolution as the limit of what the peoples of all countries meant by disarmament."

His proposal was accepted. The voting was by roll-call. When it

was Litvinov's turn to vote, he said, "I am for disarmament, and against the resolution."

The public in many countries applauded. Fifteen hundred various societies sent resolutions to the British government, duplicating the Soviet proposal for immediate and complete disarmament. The peace forces began to consolidate, helping to create the socio-political foundation for the emergence of the anti-fascist Resistance nine years later. Sympathy for the Soviet Union, that had accumulated as a result, became a giant mainspring during the Second World War. The peoples of Nazi-occupied countries learned from their own bitter experience that the Soviet Union had been right when it so vehemently opposed fascism and the preparations for another war.

In Geneva, Litvinov made two important demarches. On February 20, the local American Club held a luncheon in his honour. The hall could seat 250. Eight hundred wished to attend. The U.S. journalists were playing host. Litvinov used the opportunity to build a bridge to the future with the aim of normalising relations with the United States. At the very outset, Lenin had called for normal relations with that country. And all those years, the Soviet Union worked assiduously for this goal. Now, in Geneva, there was an opportunity to make one more step in the right direction.

Lunacharsky, who naturally attended the luncheon, recalled: "Litvinov's humorous speech was a masterpiece in its way. Not only did it show Litvinov's diplomatic scope but also revealed certain traits of his character."

Litvinov said:

"Thank you for inviting me to this luncheon, and for the opportunity of addressing American citizens—a pleasure that I am often compelled to deny myself. The initiative of the American Committee reminded me once more of how far removed from the truth official clichés and expressions can be. Officially, our two countries have no relations. Yet we know the tremendous interest in your country in everything that is happening in the Soviet Union. The peoples of the Soviet Union, too, want to know about life in America, and about its literature and culture.

"It is hardly appropriate, I think, to speak here of anything other than the subjects that occupy international Geneva. Half our ear listens to disarmament speeches, and the other half to the noises of war, of guns booming and exploding bombs.

"We pretend that speeches of a future peace are stronger than today's thunder of war. When people ask each other about their impressions of the first few weeks of the conference, they promptly

reply in an optimistic spirit. They say it has made a good start and that the pessimists, who had been sceptical, have been proved wrong. If I only believed that optimism would help the conference succeed, that it would further disarmament and the cause of peace, you would hear me speak in a most rosy style, making the brightest predictions.

"We know of Emile Coué's treatment. According to his system you can cure yourself of any illness if you repeat day after day that you are feeling better, that you are not ill. To follow Coué's advice, I would have to say to myself and others that things were going swimmingly, that we were disarming, that peace and quiet has returned to the Far East, that China's independence has not been violated, that word of Manchuria's secession from China had only accidentally coincided with Manchuria's occupation by foreign troops, and that moral disarmament has blunted the bayonets of the Japanese and Chinese, and turned bullets, shells, grenades, and bombs into harmless fireworks.

"I do not want to stain the medical reputation of the late Coué and his followers. But I have no faith at all in his system as regards the socio-political sphere.

"It seems to me that historically progress is not propelled by self-satisfaction and complacency; on the contrary, dressing up the facts is dangerous. I am sorry to say that looking at the facts I see nothing that could inspire more optimism than there was before the conference. True, the conference came into the world after agonising birthpains, and has not yet gained muscle or spoken its last word. But the sounds it has made so far show no sign of future strength, ability or talent.

"If you consider that from the point of view of the Soviet delegation mere limitation or reduction of arms is but a weak palliative which does not bring us closer to the goal that would justify an international conference convened after a thirteen-year period of preparation, that goal being security against war—if you consider that, you will agree that optimism is the last thing you can expect from us. So far, our call for complete and universal disarmament, that only possible guarantee against war, has elicited no response at the conference.

"The proposals that are being made at the conference give rise to fears that it may be sidetracked. It has always seemed to us that disarmament meant nothing other than eliminating or reducing armaments, and that, in any case, the conference would deal with one issue only, that of disarmament. But that is not what some other people think. In the Preparatory Commission there had been attempts to substitute the question of security for that of disarmament. No one would object to security. Neither does the Soviet delegation. But we



say that in the prevailing socio-economic conditions there cannot be security so long as one nation is able to attack another, so long as there are arms for such attack... Those who think otherwise, imagine that security amounts to more or less equating chances by redistributing or even building up arms. We have already seen that sort of security before the war.

"What such security amounts to is the old balance of power that guided the hand of prewar diplomacy. It failed to safeguard the world from a most horrible war, and had at best enhanced the security of some nations at the expense of others. In sum, however, it diminished the confidence in security that we knew before the war. Need we have endured all the horrors and privations of the world war, need we have prepared this conference for thirteen years, need we have concluded pacts and agreements, just to fall back again on the old principles of international diplomacy, even if slightly dressed up and garnished with new slogans?

"We have done nothing yet for physical disarmament. We have not reduced the existing armies by a single unit. Yet we are told we should take up moral disarmament. No one would object to moral disarmament, to halting the jingoist propaganda in the press and literature, the cinema, schoolbooks, and through children's toys. Would anyone object to destroying false documents, and so on? The Soviet delegation least of all. For no other country is exposed to so much moral venom in the press, in speeches, even official documents, which fact you citizens of the United States will surely corroborate. Nobody knows better than you how relations between our countries are being morally poisoned by stage-managed slander campaigns and falsified documents, organised by commercial and banking interests, political adventurers, and counter-revolutionary emigrés who will sell themselves to anyone—China today, Japan tomorrow, someone else the day after. We would never object to any measure that combats the lying ink-slingers. But everything has its time and place. The subject was dealt with some time ago at an international conference held under the auspices of the Danish government, and the Soviet Union was happy to take part in it... But all that has little or nothing to do with the elimination or reduction of armaments. I maintain that the existence of large quantities of armaments, and hence of the hope to make war, to make war successfully by means of alliances and pacts, is creating the very chauvinism, the very venom that we are told should be wiped out by nothing but administrative means.

"There is no denying that deep-going economic, political, and territorial differences exist between the capitalist states. Some countries think that their neighbours occupy land that belongs to them,

and therefore call for the restoration of their violated rights, for rectifying frontiers, and the like. And those differences will not evaporate if the happy holder of the contested land says, 'Dear neighbours, forgive us our transgressions as we forgive you yours.' That is not how history is made, how international relations are improved. What we should all strive for is that this resentment should not lead to any attempt at altering the state of affairs by resort to arms.

"I should also like to say that absence of security is not always correctly located. Some delegates at the conference said the lack of security was due to the fact that the Soviet Union was not a member of the League of Nations. The most remarkable thing is that this was said by spokesmen whose governments refuse to have relations with my country. That is as incongruous as if I were to ask someone I refuse to associate with to join my club. If we really wanted to know the factors, apart from armaments, that create the present atmosphere of political concern, insecurity and instability, we would most probably spot them in the prevailing estrangement of a multitude of states, on the one hand, and the 160 million people of the Soviet Union, on the other. Suffice it to recall the current events in the Pacific. Take the three greatest Pacific Ocean countries, namely, the Soviet Union, China, and the United States; the latter two have no relations with the former. And I am sure it takes very little imagination and foresight to see how this has contributed to, if not precipitated, the current events in the Far East. I am quite sure that if this had not been the case, the sad events would not have occurred at all or at least taken a different course..."

The *Manchester Guardian* wrote that the atmosphere at the conference was reminiscent of that in a molasses factory until the fresh breeze from Moscow cleared the air after the Soviet Foreign Commissar Litvinov's speech at the luncheon.

But while building a bridge to the minds and hearts of the American people, who less than a year later elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt as President, the Soviet Union did not burn the bridges it had built in yet another direction; it followed events in Germany with mounting concern.

The situation in that country was nothing less than ominous. One of Hitler's closest associates, Hermann Göring, had become chairman of the Reichstag. Germany was going fascist, and was seeking "arms equality" with the backing of reactionary quarters in the West.

Litvinov decided to appeal to the German public, to remind Germans of the Rapallo Treaty, of the role it had played, yielding palpable advantages and helping both countries to emerge from political isolation.

On April 16, 1932, the tenth anniversary of the Rapallo Treaty, Litvinov was in Geneva. Here he received German and Soviet journalists, and made the following statement:

"The anniversary is noteworthy in many respects, for the Treaty's international impact is not confined to just the bilateral relations of its signatories. It is fully relevant to this day. Remember when it was signed. It was signed a mere four years after the World War, when truly peaceful and normal relations had not yet been established between the Soviet Union and Germany, on the one hand, and the rest of the states, on the other. Like the Soviet Union, Germany was isolated and subjected to pressure on all sides. It would seem that each of the two states could have been enlisted in a common front against the other. But they chose to shake hands, and declared their wish to forget the recent past, write off mutual claims, launch new, truly peaceful and normal relations, and secure international cooperation.

"The Rapallo Treaty is added proof that courageous, resolute and radical solution of international issues is the simplest and the most effective. This is especially useful to remember here in Geneva, where, as ten years ago, we have again come to an international conference that has a bearing on future world affairs and, what is more, on the issue of war and peace. The problem we have tackled at the conference has been bedeviling us for more than ten years. The current conference, too, has settled none of the items on the agenda. Partly, because some of them, if soluble at all, cannot be solved by half-hearted and irresolute steps, and because they call for courageous radical solutions. The Disarmament Conference would make far better headway if the delegations were moved by the same ideas that inspired the Rapallo Treaty ten years ago. That is why I think it is not merely a bilateral instrument, but an international act that has been a good lesson for all concerned, and a model for emulation."

Litvinov's appeal to German public opinion was more than a political action. It refuted the invention of Western diplomats, notably Herbert von Dirksen, former German ambassador to Moscow, that Litvinov was a convinced opponent of Rapallo. True, Dirksen had a second version, to the effect that Litvinov had never deviated from the pro-German orientation until the Nazi seizure of power gave him an excuse, that he may, indeed, have dreamt of, to abandon the Rapallo system.

Litvinov's statement of April 16, 1932, in Geneva destroyed the legends created by Dirksen and other historians from Ribbentrop's agency.

The World Conference closed in the summer of 1932, after many months of debate. It was decided to carry over the discussion of disarmament to the next session. Litvinov left for Moscow.

Stormclouds were gathering over Europe. The epicentre of a new war was coming into bold relief. A wave of chauvinism and revenge was rolling across Germany. The jingoist campaign encouraged by domestic and foreign capitalists was yielding poisonous fruit: Hitler's people were gaining ground. Germany was turning into the head office of world anti-communism. It was priming for an attack on the Soviet Union.

Germany's arming received fresh impulse in December 1932, when a five-power conference in Geneva, attended by the United States, Britain, France, Italy, and Germany, recognised Germany's right to equal armaments.

Now Germany had licence to militarise. Matters proceeded at lightning speed. On January 30, 1933, Adolf Hitler, political rogue and chief of the National Socialist Party, became Chancellor of the German Reich. The Rapallo Treaty, one of the cornerstones of European peace, as Litvinov aptly described it, was in deadly peril.

What would come next? We saw the Soviet government make demarche after demarche in a bid to lengthen the period of peace and give the country a chance to advance its economy, its agriculture, and, notably, its defence capacity. There was much to do and, in historical terms, very little time to do it in.

The Soviet Union, dedicated as it was to the Leninist principles of peaceful coexistence, sought new contacts with the United States. The latter, too, had a stake in normalising relations with the Soviet Union. This was out of the question, however, as long as Hoover was in the White House. But after the November 1932 elections, the situation was likely to change. Roosevelt's election to the presidency gave grounds for hope. In his election speeches he had hinted that normal relations with the USSR would be beneficial.

At Litvinov's suggestion, a veteran Soviet journalist, Pavel Lapinsky, a former Polish Social-Democrat of long standing, prominent in the international labour movement, a man of wide-ranging knowledge well acquainted with world affairs, was sent to the United States.

Lapinsky was in the diplomatic service in the 1920s, and had been in charge of diplomatic information at the Soviet Mission in Berlin from 1924 to 1929. Diplomatic information departments at Soviet missions abroad had been set up by Chicherin, and were most useful.

In the United States, Lapinsky made extensive contacts, and, among other things, was introduced to Eleanor Roosevelt. All this



helped to win sympathy for the Soviet Union, and gave credence to its future official recognition.

But the activity of the League of Nations was creating anxiety. It had earned no respect in any part of the world. If the Soviet Union were to join it, it might still play a positive role in the effort to avert war. The Soviet government instructed Litvinov to establish closer contacts with statesmen and politicians in France, Czechoslovakia, and the Scandinavian countries.

On February 6, 1933, at the second session of the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva, Litvinov came out with a Soviet draft declaration defining aggression. It defined aggression quite conclusively for its day, and outlined the measures that should be taken against aggressors. Its first point said: "The attacking side in an international conflict was the country that had first committed any of the following actions." The enumeration was precise and ruled out mistakes and ambiguous interpretations. The world public received it with obvious gratification. But complying with the instructions of their governments, the Western delegations turned the offer down.

Still, the Soviet diplomat did get some satisfaction. On April 19, 1933, in a talk with Juliusz Lukasiewicz, the Polish ambassador in Moscow, Litvinov suggested holding a conference of committed adjacent countries to discuss a declaration defining the attacking side. Talks on the subject were also started with other neighbour countries.

On June 12, a World Economic Conference opened in London. And again Litvinov threw a spanner into the carefully considered designs of the Western diplomats. Speaking on behalf of the Soviet government, he offered the statesmen gathered in London to sign a convention defining aggression. Litvinov's arguments were devastatingly convincing. If the Western countries declined to sign it, they would stand exposed in the eyes of their own peoples, who were deeply troubled by the going-on in Nazi Germany.

Naturally, it was impossible to persuade everybody. But a beginning was made. In July 1933, the Soviet offer was accepted by Afghanistan, Estonia, Latvia, Persia, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Lithuania, and Finland. That was a triumph for Soviet diplomacy. The *Pravda* described it as such.

Dozens of years have passed, but to this day people show an interest in what the Soviet Union did before the war to make peace more secure. Even bourgeois historians keep returning to the subject, which is also relevant today, and give due credit to Soviet diplomacy.

Soviet diplomats scored one more victory at the Economic Confe-

rence in London. Following Litvinov's talks with British statesmen, the British government resumed trading with the Soviet Union. This prompted other countries to do the same.

Hours after one more sitting of the conference ended, Raymond Molley and William Bullitt came to see Litvinov at his hotel. On instructions of the U.S. government, they told him of their plan for future economic relations with Russia. The U.S. diplomats made clear, too, that their country was prepared to discuss recognition of the Soviet Union.

## Chapter 8

### THE WASHINGTON MISSION

On November 7, 1933, a Soviet national holiday, at about the hour when processions of Moscow citizens marched across Red Square, the ocean liner *Berengaria* dropped anchor in New York harbour. A plump man wearing a dark autumn coat, a stylish broad-brimmed hat, and white scarf, came down the gangway to board a naval launch. He was carrying a walking stick and a large briefcase. It was Maxim Litvinov.

Starting a succession of waves as it gathered speed, the launch headed for shore. A few minutes later, Litvinov stepped on firm ground, accompanied by Ivan Divilkovsky, General Secretary of the USSR Foreign Commissariat, and Konstantin Umansky, Chief of the Commissariat's Press Department.

Thus began Litvinov's Washington mission. But much time had passed before it became possible and the Soviet Union's international prestige had risen high enough.

Lenin had always kept an eye on the political course of the United States and the mood of the Americans. On August 20, 1918, in his Letter to American Workers, he wrote: "The American people have a revolutionary tradition which has been adopted by the best representatives of the American proletariat, who have repeatedly expressed their complete solidarity with us Bolsheviks."

In September 1919, Lenin said Soviet Russia was prepared to have close trade relations with the United States.

In the critical days when Yudenich's counter-revolutionary army was approaching Petrograd and Denikin's was approaching Tula, Lenin carved out some time to speak to *Chicago Daily News* correspondent Levin. "We are decidedly in favour of an economic understanding with America," he said. "With all countries, but especially with America."

After Litvinov had, on Lenin's instructions, sent a letter to President Woodrow Wilson from Stockholm, the Soviet government took one more step towards contacts with the United States: Ludwig Martens, a Russian in New York, was sent credentials appointing

him official representative of the Soviet Land in the USA, and authorising him to negotiate with the U. S. administration.

A veteran Russian revolutionary, formerly member of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, Martens had emigrated to the United States long before the October Revolution. He had many friends there, and did his best to carry out his instructions: saw statesmen and industrialists, lawyers and congressmen, and addressed the working class of America. In March 1919, Martens handed a memorandum to the U.S. Department of State. "I have been authorised by my government," Martens wrote, "to negotiate the earliest possible renewal of trade relations mutually profitable to Russia and America."

In vain. There was no answer. He began publishing a magazine, *Soviet Russia*, which printed Lenin's articles and the decrees of the Soviet government. The magazine was banned, and Martens was summoned to court. He hid out with friends in Washington.

An official letter came from the Foreign Commissariat, containing advice and instructions. A postscript by Litvinov said: "Hold your head high, friend. Things will look up. The future is with us. We'll be stronger, and things will hum."

The case against Martens was inspired by quarters who supplied arms and money to Russian counter-revolutionaries. But the crushing defeat that the Red Army inflicted on the domestic counter-revolution and the foreign intervention troops, had a sobering effect on Europe, and made America take notice, too. Still, the United States maintained its non-recognition policy. The top echelon refused to understand what had happened in Russia. All information about the Revolution came from the U.S. Ambassador at the Tsar's court, David Francis, a banker and certainly not the most perceptive of American diplomats. While Lloyd George, who had never been in Russia, thought in all earnest that Kharkov was the name of some Russian general, Francis, who was in Petrograd, ought to have known better. Yet he reported to Washington that the Bolsheviks were "killing everybody wearing a white collar, every educated person, everyone who was not a Bolshevik".

The Wilson administration was dismayed by the fact that millions of Americans were admirers of the new state in Russia. Emigré revolutionaries from Russia, who were in the United States during the war and had close contacts with the American labour movement, helped spread the truth about Soviet Russia.

In November 1919, John Reed briefed Lenin on the communist movement in America. The course of the Russian Revolution, the consolidation of the Soviets, and, lastly, the October Revolution and



the spread of the communist doctrine across Europe, he wrote, had fostered a movement for a revision of aims and tactics. Certainly, he added, the Russian comrades in America were strongly conscious of the revolution that had begun in Europe. They and members of other socialist federations that had people of Russian origin, were propagating new principles, tactics, and organisational methods.

America's ruling class still hoped that the Bolsheviks would collapse. In the latter half of the twenties, the papers carried sensational reports. In Russia, everybody was free to steal, starve, kill and die, said a headline in November 1925. Another report said Siberia was trying to shake off Moscow's headmanship. The papers wrote Russia was selling its treasures to save the Soviet regime. Reports in 1926 said the Soviets were in bad trouble, and troops in Odessa had mutinied. In 1927, there was a report that Russia's industry was on the brink of collapse.

At the height of one more anti-Soviet campaign, a disastrous economic crisis broke out in the capitalist world. It spread to all countries and all areas of production, but the most crushing blow fell upon the richest of the capitalist countries, the United States of America. Seventeen million people lost their jobs. Slums appeared all round the cities. The Americans called them Hoover towns after their President, who was promising to cope with the crisis.

But Hoover was helpless. And the crisis made America's business world look more realistically at the Soviet Union. Businessmen, economists, scholars, and political observers headed for Moscow. In June 1929, public leader and journalist Allen Johnson, who had been in Moscow before, came to the Soviet capital again. A series of well-meaning articles in U.S. newspapers and journals followed. He had spoken to Mikhail Kalinin<sup>58</sup> about the state of Soviet agriculture and the possibilities of a Soviet-American rapprochement, with Valerian Kuibyshev<sup>59</sup> about Soviet industry, and with Anastas Mikoyan about Soviet-American commercial relations.

Interest in the Soviet Union grew by leaps and bounds, especially among U.S. intellectuals. The small but intrepid Communist Party of the USA was winning followers. Writers, especially Theodore Dreiser with his *American Tragedy*, were hastening America's political awakening. Letters from workers and farmers, writers and businessmen, streamed to the Soviet Union. Mostly, to one of the two following addresses: Central Executive Committee Chairman Mikhail Kalinin, and Foreign Commissar Maxim Litvinov. Some were naive, some clear-sighted—but that was America in its diversity. The letter-writers said they were calling on their government to recognise the Soviet Union.

A Robley D. Stevens of Pennsylvania wrote to Kalinin that he had a soft spot for the Soviet Union and would be flattered if, after the USSR is recognised, he were appointed honorary Soviet consul in Philadelphia. He promised to perform his duties honestly, and asked Kalinin to send him an autographed photo. His brother wrote that he had graduated from Annapolis Naval Academy and generously offered his services as naval consultant. Novelist Glenn W. Blodget wrote that he was doing his best to disseminate the truth about Soviet Russia. He, too, asked Kalinin for an autograph which, he amplified, would be a welcome addition to his collection of three, those of Leo Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, and Maxim Litvinov.

Unfailingly, replies were sent to all writers. Litvinov settled the autograph problem very simply: he sent autographs only to congressmen, government officials, and children. He had special cards made, and placed his signature either on top, or diagonally on the left, so that it could not be used for improper purposes.

The letters reflected the prevailing sentiment among Americans. The awakening also applied to the ruling echelon. A representative delegation headed by Senator Millard E. Tydings arrived in Moscow in June 1929. It stayed at Hotel National. Alexander Chumak of the Foreign Commissariat was their guide and interpreter. In his younger years, he had lived in the United States with his father, had attended college there, knew the language, and the specific features of the country. When Chumak came to the hotel, Tydings said, "There's been no rebellion in the two days we've been here." This was a sarcastic reference to the U.S. press, which carried daily items about hunger and insurrection in the Soviet capital.

The Senators were received by Alexei Rykov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Valerian Kuibyshev, Chairman of the Economic Council, Anastas Mikoyan, Foreign Trade Commissar, and Foreign Affairs Commissar Maxim Litvinov. Senator Franck L. Fay held talks with Rudzutak, Transport Commissar, about a concession for building a railway car plant. He was told, however, that no export of currency would be allowed. Then Fay suggested building a shoe factory, and promised to put shoes on the feet of every Russian. He was politely turned down.

It became clear to the Americans that the time of concessions in Russia was over. Russia wanted mutually profitable trade. They said they wanted to see the country, particularly the Crimea, the Caucasus, and a few other places. The Foreign Commissariat organised a journey across the Soviet Union, and the Senators set out, with Alexander Chumak as their guide.

They flew a little K-4 plane to Mineralniye Vody in the Northern

Caucasus. That took all day. Out of the portholes they looked down on the vast collective-farm fields and the industrial building sites. Industiously they took notes.

From Mineralniye Vody, this time in a bigger plane, they flew to Baku along the shore of the Caspian Sea. Beneath them were the boundless Caspian steppes. The Senators were in raptures about the incredibly vast spaces. Among other things, they asked the pilot to show them his flying skills. The pilot did what he was asked. They enjoyed it tremendously, and said Soviet Russia, too, had good pilots.

After Baku, the guests were taken to the holiday resorts on the Black Sea coast—Gagry, Sochi, Batumi, and Sukhumi. They also visited Tbilisi, then went on to the Crimea, where they saw Yalta and Sevastopol. On returning to Moscow, they were again received by Litvinov. They said they were delighted, but would be still more delighted if they were granted concessions. Litvinov informed them that the Soviet Union was no longer granting concessions, but was willing to do mutually beneficial business. It was high time, he added, that the USA recognised the Soviet Union.

One more envoy, the famous Hugh Cooper, the man who had built the Grand Coulee Dam, came to Russia in November 1929. He came as consultant to the Dnieper hydropower project. One of his aims was to see what the Russians could do. Official America respected his opinion.

Cooper, a jolly little man, was received by Litvinov. He created a good impression. Litvinov asked him about the political situation and the prevailing mood in the United States. It was an informal amicable conversation. Everything seemed to have been settled. Still, Cooper would not leave. Clearly, there was something on his mind.

"If there is anything more I can do for you, Mr. Cooper, don't hesitate to ask."

Slightly embarrassed, Cooper said:

"I've been shown the Treasury Exhibition, and was tremendously impressed. That cigarette case with sapphires and a diamond in the middle—it had belonged to a Russian Count. Mr. Litvinov, if I do my job well, could I ask for it as a gift?"

Litvinov chuckled. This was not for him to decide, he said. He would tell the government. "I can only promise you I'll back your request."

When Cooper's job was done, he was decorated with the Order of Lenin, the highest Soviet award, and was also given the cigarette case he had asked for.

Gradually, contacts expanded. America was getting to know So-

viet Russia. It showed sympathy and respect. No longer was it possible to hush up Soviet successes.

In 1932, the journal *Nation* reported that the first four years of the Soviet five-year plan had seen truly remarkable results. The Soviet Union had laboured with wartime dedication. The face of the country was changing. This applied to Moscow with its hundreds of newly-paved streets, its new squares and buildings, its new suburbs and belt of new factories in the outskirts. This also applied to the less important cities. New towns were springing up in the steppelands and deserts—not just a few, at least fifty, with populations of 50,000 to 250,000. All this occurred in four years. Each new town was set round one or more new enterprises built to develop local natural resources. Hundreds of small power stations and a string of gigantic ones, like the Dnieper Hydropower Station, had gone up to make Lenin's formula come true: *Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country*. Russia had begun thinking in terms of machines. It was stepping from the wooden age into the age of iron, steel, concrete, and engines.

So much for *Nation's* commentary.

At the end of April 1932, U.S. journalist Ralph Barnes, whom official and business quarters in the United States trusted implicitly, put a number of questions to Joseph Stalin.

Barnes indicated there was interested talk in the United States of sending an unofficial American trade representative to Moscow, accompanied by a staff of experts, to explore the possibilities of closer trade ties between the two countries. He asked what the attitude of the Soviet government would be.

Stalin told Barnes that the USSR welcomed trade representatives and experts of countries that had normal relations with the USSR. The Soviet government would look favourably on such a move by the United States.

Barnes questioned Stalin more closely as to the kind of orders American firms could place in Russia. Stalin gave no figures but said that the volume of orders could be increased several times over. Then Barnes came to the question that interested the U.S. ruling circles most of all. It was felt in the United States, he said, that both the Soviet and U.S. governments had the same reaction to the recent events in the Far East, and that, in general, the gap between Soviet and American policies had grown narrower.

Stalin replied that it was very difficult to grasp the essence of U.S. Far Eastern policy. As for the USSR, it would continue to follow its policy of peace.

Barnes emphasised the similarities between the United States and



the Soviet Union, the good will of the American and Soviet people, and asked if it were possible to convince both peoples that a military conflict between the two countries should never occur.

Stalin replied that there was nothing simpler than convincing the peoples of both countries that mutual annihilation is harmful and criminal. Unfortunately, he added, questions of war and peace are not always decided by the people. The Soviet people and their government hoped that no military conflict between the two countries would ever occur.

It was May 1932. The world was on the brink of political cataclysms. Many had predicted them. Especially one man, a man who always followed events with keen insight, who analysed them and drew conclusions—Georgy Chicherin.

He lived in a quiet Moscow street, in a house that had once belonged to a banker. One night, he invited his former secretary, Boris Korotkin, to come and see him.

"You know, Boris," Chicherin said, "the time has come to pack my things and move."

"Why?"

"This house will soon be the American Embassy."

"What are you talking about? We've no diplomatic relations with the United States."

"Not yet. But we'll have them soon."

On the following day, Korotkin told Kalinin of what Chicherin had said.

"Chicherin's right," Kalinin replied. "And his house will go to the American Embassy. But he need not worry, we'll take care of him."

An American trade delegation came to Moscow soon after the departure of journalist Ralph Barnes. The businessmen made the rounds of the city. They saw old Okhotny Riad with its squat little houses. They saw peasants in crude garb, and women carrying underfed children, outside the building where Kalinin had his reception-room. The Americans asked hundreds of questions. They wanted to know everything, and to see the factories that were being built. They looked in amazement at the work force—yesterday's peasants who were pushing carts with soil from the foundation pits. They asked about building machinery, and were told there was none so far.

The delegation was received most cordially. But no hasty conclusions were drawn about its intentions. The Foreign Commissariat gave a reception in its honour.

Upon the delegation's return to the United States, the Foreign

Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives drafted this resolution:

Whereas all reports from all reliable unprejudiced sources ... clearly show that the Soviet Government is stable; and

Whereas all nations have recognised and have established diplomatic and commercial relations with the Soviet Government of Russia; and

Whereas the Soviet Government of Russia on innumerable occasions has expressed the desire to re-establish friendly relations with the United States; and

Whereas due to the delay in bringing about a friendly relationship between the United States and the Soviet Government of Russia, the citizens of the United States have been deprived of beneficial commercial intercourse, which has been taken advantage of by the governments and peoples of other countries. Therefore be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America assembled,

That the President of the United States be, and is hereby requested to direct the Secretary of State to enter into negotiations with the Soviet Government of Russia so as to re-establish friendly and diplomatic relations between the United States and Russia.

Thus did the predictions of the Bolshevik regime's imminent collapse turn into an acknowledgement of Soviet successes. But the man in the White House was still Herbert Hoover, and the resolution was blocked.

In 1933, President Roosevelt moved into the White House. He was fifty, scion of a wealthy family, and had taken up politics at a fairly young age. At 28 he was in the New York State Senate, and Assistant Secretary of the Navy from 1913 to 1920. In 1929, he was Governor of New York State, and a leader of the Democratic Party.

Some said he was endowed with the finest human virtues, others accused him of all mortal sins. He was revered and he was hated. But when he died, he was mourned not only by his countrymen, but by people all over the world.

William Foster, Chairman of the CPUSA, wrote that President Roosevelt, a prosperous man, represented the liberal part of the capitalist class. He was a convinced defender of capitalism, and designed all his policies to safeguard it. Roosevelt's enemies called him a Socialist, but the charge was ludicrous. Roosevelt was merely trying to save capitalism by eliminating some of its more intolerable faults. He was certainly opposed to everything that could weaken the econo-

mic and political power of big business. His breadth of vision and sound approach to the crucial issues of world politics placed Roosevelt among the outstanding political figures of the 20th century.

The aftermaths of the economic crisis were still felt in the latter half of 1933. And Roosevelt saw that only one country had escaped the savage chaos that had precipitated a wave of suicides, a crime wave, despair, and fear of the future. No, he had no sympathy for the Soviet system. But he took a close look at the country which had managed to evade the economic disasters. He saw that the Soviet Union was busy building, that it wanted no war, that it needed credits, goods, and specialists. Establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union would, Roosevelt felt, boost trade and help reduce unemployment, and win him the acclaim of most Americans.

In the autumn, the matter came up in the Senate. Out of the 96 Senators, only two were against.

On October 10, Roosevelt published his message to Kalinin, offering to resume diplomatic relations. Roosevelt wrote:

Since the beginning of my Administration, I have contemplated the desirability of an effort to end the present abnormal relations between the hundred and twenty-five million people of the United States and the hundred and sixty million people of Russia.

It is most regrettable that these great peoples, between whom a happy tradition of friendship existed for more than a century to their mutual advantage, should now be without a practical method of communicating directly with each other. The difficulties that have created this anomalous situation are serious but not, in my opinion, insoluble and difficulties between great nations can be removed only by frank, friendly conversations. If you are of similar mind I should be glad to receive any representatives you may designate to explore with me personally all questions outstanding between our countries. Participation in such a discussion would, of course, not commit either nation to any future course of action, but would indicate a sincere desire to reach a satisfactory solution of the problems involved. It is my hope that such conversations might result in good to the people of both our countries.

The Soviet newspapers printed Roosevelt's message on October 21, along with Mikhail Kalinin's reply:

I have received your message of October tenth. I have always considered most abnormal and regrettable a situation wherein, during the past sixteen years two great Republics—the United

States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics—have lacked the usual methods of communication and have been deprived of the benefits which such communication could give. I am glad to note that you have also reached the same conclusion.

There is no doubt that difficulties, present or arising, between two countries can be solved only when direct relations exist between them; and that, on the other hand, they have no chance for solution in the absence of such relations. I take the liberty to express the opinion that the abnormal situation to which you correctly refer in your message, is having a bad effect not only on the interests of the two States concerned, but also on the general international situation, increasing the element of unrest, complicating the process of consolidating world peace, and encouraging forces that tend to disturb that peace.

In accordance with the above, I gladly accept your proposal to send to the United States a representative of the Soviet Government to discuss with you the questions of interest to our countries. The Soviet Government will be represented by Mr. M. M. Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, who will come to Washington at a time to be mutually agreed upon.

A few days later, the President of the United States cabled that he would be pleased to receive the Soviet diplomat early in November. Litvinov lost no time. He would go via Warsaw, Berlin, and Paris, and board an ocean liner in Le Havre. En route, he would have two meetings. One of them, exceedingly unpleasant. *Izvestia* and TASS correspondents Lily Kait and Ivan Bepalov, who were to cover the Georgy Dimitrov trial in Leipzig, had been arrested in Berlin. Gestapo thugs had smashed up their offices. Litvinov was going to speak about it with von Neurath, then the Nazi Foreign Minister. And in Paris, Litvinov meant to speak to Joseph Paul-Boncour, the French Foreign Minister, on European security. He also wanted to sound out the French about the Soviet Union's impending admission to the League of Nations.

There were many other big and small concerns. The circumstantial and pertinacious Litvinov did not forget a personal gift to the President. Upon learning that Roosevelt collected stamps, he took along an album of all the stamps that had appeared in the Soviet Union since the Revolution.

On October 27, Litvinov and his companions left Moscow for Washington. At Wilhelmstrasse in the German capital, Litvinov warned that the Soviet government would take counter-measures if the *Izvestia* and TASS correspondents were not released immediately.

A few hours later, the Soviet journalists were free.



In the seven days at sea, Litvinov rested. He put receptions, meetings, and negotiations out of his mind. He arranged a chess tournament, beat Divilkovsky, and was very pleased with himself.

How often had he wished he could shed the eternal guardedness, and go off to the hills somewhere, or roam about in the woods. Never in all his life had he had a chance to think of himself. In the evenings at home, he would now and then spread a map of the world on the dinner table, and take his son on a long journey.

"How about Zanzibar tonight," he would say. They sailed across the Black Sea, through the straits, across the Sea of Marmara and the Red Sea, caught fish in the Bab el Mandeb Strait, and made friends with local African tribes. Then, they crashed their way through the jungle along the Amazon, or wandered about the rocky paths of Sicily. Every once in a while, the husky buzz of the telephone would interrupt their journey. Litvinov would rush to his study to answer the call, and would then return to the game from that other, complex and troublous world, shaking off distracting thoughts. "Well, my boy, let's go to Stockholm this time. Show me how—from Moscow."

On one occasion, it is true, he did perform an extraordinary journey. After a conference in Geneva, he told his "guardian angel" he could take the night off, for he, Litvinov, was going to the hotel. Then he told the driver to go the other way, across the hills, to Italy.

The inevitable happened: on the border the Italians stopped him. He had no visa. The border guards held counsel, gathered a bunch of Alpine flowers, and gave them to Litvinov. They saluted, and said the Signor Minister was free to proceed.

He drove about the roads of Italy for three days, stopping at taverns, drinking beer, eating his favourite lentil dishes, calling at mountain hamlets, and going to the movies.

When the press learned of Litvinov's going to Washington to negotiate with President Roosevelt, it described the news as the biggest in years. The U.S. papers carried surveys of Soviet foreign policy and Soviet economy, studies of Russian and Soviet history, and thumbnail portraits of Soviet statesmen. Quite a few of the items concerned the person of Maxim Litvinov.

Back in October, a group of leading U.S. foreign correspondents had set out for Europe, and among them Walter Duranty, ace newsman of the 1930s and 40s. Along with other correspondents who had gathered in Le Havre, they booked tickets on the *Berengaria* in order to accompany the Soviet diplomat on his trip to the United States.

Usually, Litvinov saw foreign journalists quite willingly. He spoke to them of the Soviet Union's foreign policy and its specific demar-

ches, but was always aware that an incautious word was liable to be perverted. Seeing that the forthcoming talks in Washington were an occasion that called for extreme caution, he decided this time to avoid the press.

Walter Duranty had met Litvinov many times before—in Geneva, Moscow, and other centres of European politics, and knew of Litvinov's strength of character—if Litvinov said no, nothing could make him change his mind. So he tried acting through Umansky and Divilkovsky. But both of them refused to help. He then decided to appeal to Litvinov directly. He watched for him after dark on the upper deck, and when the Foreign Commissar emerged for his daily stroll, asked him to grant the press corps a short talk. Litvinov said he preferred to do it upon arrival in the USA. But Duranty had a trump up his sleeve. He handed Litvinov an invitation card to a lunch the journalists were holding in his honour. And Litvinov accepted.

The lunch turned into an improvised press conference. The ocean was relatively calm. The waves rolled amiably along the iron hull of the *Berengaria*. Everyone was gathered round a long oval table in the salon. Duranty proved to be a connoisseur of the Russian cuisine. There was Russian meat pie, Russian chicken rissoles, and a few more Russian dishes. After the meal, Litvinov answered the journalists' questions:

Q. "Mr. Commissar, could you say something about the outcome of your mission?"

A. "That's a question I'd rather answer jointly with President Roosevelt. It is my hope that the United States has the same interest in establishing diplomatic relations as the Soviet Union."

Q. "What does your country think of Japan's behaviour in the Far East?"

A. "The Soviet Union is firmly opposed to any aggression. That is the key to its attitude towards the events in Manchuria."

Q. "Will the Soviet Union join the League of Nations?"

A. "If it's invited to join, I presume it will."

Q. "Is it true, Mr. Commissar, that you eliminated the governor-general when you escaped from a Kiev prison in 1917?"

A. "To begin with, I escaped from the Kiev prison in 1903, not 1917. The escape was organised by a group of imprisoned followers of Lenin with aid from outside. We were farthest from the thought of what you called eliminating the Kiev governor-general. He was the one who swore he'd hang us if we were caught."

Q. "What'll happen if your talks in Washington fail?"

A. "The Soviet Union will live on as in the preceding sixteen years. The United States, too, will live on as before. But the absence of nor-

mal relations between our countries is damaging to the United States and to American commerce. Many Americans, especially the business world, are aware of it. Nor should we forget our common responsibility for safeguarding world peace."

The questioning continued. Everyone tried to get in his question. Duranty and most of his colleagues had ordered radio connections with their editorial offices. That had cost a pile of money. Umansky tried to keep matters in hand. He begged them not to speak all at once and maintain some semblance of order. In vain. They were in a hurry.

"What do you think of Roosevelt? How's Stalin? They say he's ill. What can you say of Soviet-American trade? What can you offer the USA? Is it true Soviet Russia is willing to sell paintings from the Hermitage collection in exchange for U.S. machine-tools? If Washington does recognise the USSR, who's going to be ambassador?"

Litvinov had an answer for every question. His replies were quiet-spoken and balanced. A mere hint of a sarcastic smile would appear on his lips when answering absurd questions. But he answered them, and the climate at the press conference was increasingly amiable.

When question-time was over, Duranty thanked the Soviet Commissar. The attending journalists autographed his invitation card, he autographed theirs. The voyage was coming to an end. On reaching the American shore, Litvinov issued a statement to the press:

"I am stepping on to the soil of the great American Republic deeply aware of the honour of bringing greetings to the American people from the peoples of the Soviet Union as their official representative. I am conscious of the fact that, in a sense, I am making the first breach in the artificial barrier that had for sixteen years hindered normal intercourse between the peoples of our two countries. The purpose of my visit is known from the published messages exchanged by Mr. Roosevelt and Comrade Kalinin. The abnormal situation of the past sixteen years has been acknowledged by both sides. And they have set about rectifying it. All of us know that it benefited neither side, and the sooner it ends, the better for all concerned."

Answering the questions of the importunate journalists, Litvinov had dropped a phrase that they immediately picked up. "We can sign an agreement within half an hour," he had said. This was certainly over-optimistic. But the Soviet diplomat felt it was useful, even necessary. It would attune the U.S. public, which was looking forward to such an agreement, to the desired goal.

As Litvinov was walking up the steps of the White House to meet Roosevelt at last, special editions of newspapers in New York, Washington, Chicago, San Francisco, and other cities were announcing the "historic meeting of Roosevelt and Litvinov that would end the

alienation". The Hearst press maintained that the Soviet diplomat's arrival in Washington would make history.

Roosevelt received Litvinov cordially, but with a measure of restraint. The President's wife and State Secretary Cordell Hull were present in the large, bleak, poorly-lit chamber. Roosevelt was seated in an armchair, his large silver-haired head slightly thrown back. He went through the motion of rising to greet the guest. Knowing that Roosevelt could not really stand up, Litvinov strode rapidly towards him. They shook hands. The President asked about the voyage, said he was glad to see a representative of the Soviet Union in Washington, and politely inquired about Kalinin and his health. Litvinov said Kalinin was well and had asked to convey his best wishes to the President..

Ending his short visit, Litvinov handed Roosevelt the gift he had brought—an album of stamps. Paging through it, Roosevelt did not bother to contain his pleasure.

On the following day, *Pravda* described Litvinov's White House visit as a "brief act of courtesy". Though no details were known, it said, the U.S. press reported that the meeting had been "most cordial".

A few days later, on November 13, 1933, Ivan Divilkovsky wrote to his wife in Moscow, describing the events of those days. "In New York," his account ran, "the newspapermen's attack on Litvinov even before we had disembarked occurred in the usual American style. We (Umansky and I) were brushed aside, and an indescribable commotion reigned for nothing less than an hour. This occurred close to the quarantine island at the entrance to Hudson Bay with its forbidding port structures. The morning was foggy and there was a drizzle. We could not yet see New York. Later, when we were being taken ashore by a steam launch we passed the Statue of Liberty (I took some good pictures of it) and glimpsed the skyscrapers on the other side of the bay. But since it was far and the fog was fairly dense, they created no special impression."

"From the outset, Litvinov was surrounded by eight plainclothesmen, each of them the height of a steeple, broad-shouldered, dressed in the same sports coats, and chewing gum—at least that's what it seemed to me for that is what we expect them to do. The press kept after us on the launch.

"A few journalists managed to get aboard, while the cameramen of some newsreel company had a launch of their own, which travelled alongside and blocked our view of the city. Litvinov was being filmed all the way from the ship to the shore.

"The launch tied up at the landing in the trade docks of Jersey



city, a New York suburb. Believe me, each suburb is itself as big as a bigger than average European town. A special train was waiting at the docks. It set out for Washington as soon as it managed to pull out of the girdle formed by an army of newspapermen. Some photographers had even scrambled on to the roof of the cars. The treatment was typically American. The photographers rushed at Litvinov, shook his hand, crowded round him, yelled, wanted him to take off his hat, to smile for them, to bow, to speak, and so on. Hereabouts, as we saw later, everybody obeys them, even top-ranking officials.

"By that time, we had seen only glimpses of New York—the outlines of a few skyscrapers and the suburbs that the train went through. All of them grey, squat, nondescript. But amidst all this, amidst the shabby little houses, the lines of drying laundry, and the empty lots, there rose to the skies objects of incredible hugeness: factories, bridges, oil tanks, automobile ramps, and an endless succession of railway stations. Nothing fundamentally new, as it were, nothing extraordinary for the European's vision, but everything inflated, exaggerated, set up in large numbers crudely, hastily, carelessly, unattractively, but certainly on solid ground, and what is more, with obvious signs of wealth. It is quite clear that in this country people have lots of money, which they spend unsparingly, handsomely, in the American style.

"And in Washington, when we arrived, the commotion was still greater: photographers everywhere, the crowds that came to meet us, and the drive through the city with an escort of motorcycles instead of the erstwhile cavalry. Then, hard work. We haven't seen the city yet. Went out for a short walk just twice.

"We're staying at Skvirsky's: he let us have three rooms—his own, the office, and the library. That's where we eat, too, and where we work. We go out on official business only—to the State Department, and the like. The old man spends all day at sittings in the State Department or in the White House (with the President). I usually come along to the State Department, but we've all only once been in the White House at the gala luncheon. However, that's no subject for a letter.

"Initially, Skvirsky's house was surrounded by an incredible number of policemen—not as an honour guard, but to protect us, for there had been rumours of someone wanting to kill us. One white emigré had even been arrested. But that was in New York. Now, at our request, the force has been considerably reduced. But there is still at least one man who comes along wherever we go, and there's also a man in Skvirsky's hall downstairs. He's very useful—for he helps us send telegrams, and the like."

The basic points of the Soviet position at the talks with the U.S. government had been defined back in Moscow. It was obvious that Roosevelt's administration was not ready to come to terms on all desired points. Those who did not want the Soviet Union recognised were not wasting time. They were doing their worst to hold up the negotiations. Back on May 27, 1933, Robert F. Kelley, Chief of the State Department's Division of Eastern European Affairs, had drawn up a memorandum for Roosevelt, saying there should be three conditions that the Soviet Union must fulfil: pay the Tsar's debts, pay compensation for U.S. property nationalised after the Revolution, and, lastly, halt all revolutionary propaganda.

The Soviet Union could neither pay the Tsar's debts nor the price of the property of U.S. capitalists. Besides, it had material counter-claims in connection with the U.S. armed intervention in Russia.

No one but Roosevelt could settle the matter of claims and counter-claims. He was the kind of perceptive statesman who looked far into the future, who saw, indeed, that normalisation of relations with the Soviet Union could no longer be put off.

But, who, Litvinov wondered, would negotiate with him—Cordell Hull or the President? In the former case, the talks would be sure to drag out. There was obvious nervous tension in the White House. Litvinov had felt it the first time he called. Still, it was clear that everything there was ruled by the will and intellect of the President. The nervousness, therefore, meant that Roosevelt was barely keeping control of the enormous machinery of state and contending with covert and overt resistance.

That resistance was mounting day by day. Looking through the Washington and New York papers, Litvinov saw that not only the American opponents of recognising the Soviet Union were active, but also the large white emigré colony. The counterrevolutionaries swept out of Russia by the October Revolution who had found refuge in the United States, still hoped that capitalism, if not the monarchy, would be restored in Russia. The papers published wild inventions and slander alongside positive reports about the Soviet Union and its diplomats.

That was the setting in which the Washington negotiations began.

Each morning Litvinov came to either the State Department or the White House, depending on the pre-arranged programme. Journalists were waiting anxiously at the entrance. State Department officials and policemen kept the most enterprising ones at bay. Upon alighting from his limousine, Litvinov would say hello to the journalists, ask them to be patient, and walk to the door smiling.

Roosevelt was taking the measure of the Soviet diplomat with lively interest. He watched his behaviour and manners, expecting to spot the special features that most people thought were inherent in Russian revolutionaries. And was surprised he could not spot them. A corpulent man, dressed conservatively, quiet-spoken, poised, fluent in English. Presumably, given his perceptiveness, Roosevelt had managed during the fortnight of their association to identify and assess the Soviet Commissar's inner world and outlook. It came as no surprise, therefore, that when Litvinov arrived in Washington again eight years later, their relationship was at once nothing less than friendly.

The credit for this should go to Litvinov's strength of character and force of conviction, to his intellect. For he was one of those people who could make an enemy respect them. That was something all the men of Lenin's mould had in common. A few dozen years ago, Boris Stomoniakov wrote: "The historians studying our times will examine the astonishing person and international role of the man who had grown from a professional revolutionary and undergrounder into a distinguished diplomat. They will look for an explanation of the astonishing transformation and brilliant successes of Comrade Litvinov on the international scene in his biography and his personal qualities. And they will find it, because Comrade Litvinov was a richly endowed and strong personality, a man of extraordinary stature."

That he was. He was one of those for whom the revolution was a university. His formal education was confined to a general secondary school. And as People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, a diplomat of world renown, he would sometimes say to his friends with a touch of bitterness that "a man must have a profession, and certainly an education, yet I haven't even a trade".

And Litvinov was not the only one to say it. One day Krasin observed to his friends, "Who are we, Soviet diplomats? Me—an engineer, Krestinsky—a schoolteacher! We're no diplomats!" Yet they held their own against refined, schooled, and experienced bourgeois diplomats.

Roosevelt, the keen-sighted politician that he was, detected Litvinov's realism at once. He saw him as a deeply convinced man representing a new world he, Roosevelt, knew nothing about. It was a world that Litvinov cherished and would promote and safeguard.

The U.S. President liked that. Litvinov was a worthy partner. Roosevelt therefore took the negotiations into his own hands. This was neither simple nor safe. Smalltown America was up in arms against the President's negotiating with the Bolsheviks. Even Roosevelt's mother was used to prevent him from establishing diplomatic

relations with the Soviet Union. All America knew Roosevelt was fond of his mother, while Eleanor, his wife, did not get along with her. An attempt was made, too, to win the assistance of the President's wife.

The day Roosevelt first took over the negotiations, Eleanor appeared in the President's study unexpectedly for Litvinov. She said, "Franklin, why don't you tell your mother about your talks with Mr. Litvinov? Fancy her waking up one morning and learning that diplomatic relations had been established with Soviet Russia. Have you thought how she'd take it? She'll probably be shocked."

"What of it," Roosevelt replied. "It won't do her any harm."

On the first day, State Secretary Hull had set forth the American claims, named the figures of all the loans granted to Kerensky's-Russian government—so-and-so-many millions of dollars and the date, so-many-more dollars and the date, etc.

Litvinov remarked that he could add to that list. The credits that had been granted to Kerensky had also been spent on arming Yudenich and his counter-revolutionary army, Wrangel and other tsarist generals. This financing of the counter-revolution had caused incalculable suffering to the Russian people. More, it had been contrary to the wishes of the American people. That was easy to prove. He, Litvinov, was sure that if the present administration had ruled America at that time, Kerensky and the tsarist generals would have received nothing. How could one expect the Russian people to pay for the guns and rifles that were used against them? That would be contrary to common sense, and comparable to making the Americans repay Britain what the latter had spent fighting against the American colonies in the War of Independence. By the way, he added, during that war forward-looking Russians were on the side of the Americans. Even Catherine II spoke of her sympathy for the Americans. Interesting documents on that score were available in the archive of the tsarist Foreign Affairs Ministry.

Litvinov was careful to weigh every word. Roosevelt listened with interest, glancing at Hull now and then, and seeing that the latter obviously treated Litvinov's words as Red propaganda.

After a long-drawn-out discussion of the first point, seeing that Litvinov would not budge since that point had been settled in Moscow, Roosevelt suggested going on to the second item, and observed that they could return to the first later.

Hull tendered Litvinov a list of claims of U.S. investors whose property had been nationalised in Russia after the Revolution. He said the U. S. government insisted on compensation.

This item was discussed to and fro for several days. Litvinov said



the Soviet government had a counter-claim: during the Civil War in Russia, the United States had sent an expeditionary corps to Siberia under General Graves. The damage the Americans inflicted, was considerably greater than what the Americans lost in Russia. Hull reminded Litvinov that the corps under Graves was withdrawn. Litvinov saw fit to specify: the corps was *compelled to withdraw*, for Graves saw the intervention was in vain.

The next item on the agenda was easier. They dealt with it more quickly. Roosevelt said the Soviet Union must refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of the United States. He also asked Litvinov if Americans at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow would be guaranteed freedom of conscience—to go to church or synagogue, depending on their religion.

Litvinov introduced Roosevelt to the substance of the Soviet Constitution, cited its various articles guaranteeing freedom of conscience, and said all embassies accredited in Moscow made use of that freedom.

Cordell Hull was captious. After Litvinov had certified in writing that U.S. diplomats were guaranteed freedom of religious worship, he demanded that Americans should also be allowed to own or rent premises for religious services. Litvinov objected. He said Americans would not have privileges of that sort. He would not accept anything that went against the interests of the Soviet Union.

Shortly before concluding the talks, Roosevelt announced that he would appoint William Bullitt U.S. Ambassador to Moscow.

After his 1919 Moscow visit, Bullitt had been passing himself off as an advocate of rapprochement with Soviet Russia. Roosevelt thought he was a fitting candidate. But Moscow knew all too well what the U. S. diplomat stood for.

Bullitt, who was present at the talks in the White House, was in high spirits. He said he planned a short visit to Moscow in late November.

"Tell me, Mr. Litvinov, what's the highest place in Moscow?"

"The Sparrow Hills—you see all of Moscow from there."

"Splendid. Then that's where we'll build our embassy building. I have a plan, it'll be a copy of George Washington's house."

Litvinov said with restraint:

"I'll be happy to see you in Moscow. We'll have to work very hard to shape friendly relations for the good of our two nations."

The remaining few days abounded in talks and negotiations. Not all the particulars have been preserved in archives. There must have been snags and details that we will never know about, for all of the participants in the main talks have long since left this world. But par-

ticulars, after all, are no more than vignettes in the frame that holds the canvas. The end result was what mattered.

Litvinov had added to Roosevelt's conviction that there was nothing more important for the two countries than recognising each other. Roosevelt knew he could not fail to recognise the Soviet Union. The long and assiduous talks, all the work involved, culminated in the writing of two short letters, one signed by the President, the other by the Soviet diplomat.

Roosevelt wrote:

My dear Mr. Litvinov,

I am very happy to inform you that as a result of our conversations, the Government of the United States has decided to establish normal diplomatic relations with the Government of the USSR and to exchange ambassadors.

I trust that the relations now established between our peoples may forever remain normal and friendly and that our nations henceforth may cooperate for their mutual benefit and for the preservation of world peace.

On the instructions of the Soviet government, Litvinov handed Roosevelt the answer:

My dear Mr. President,

I am very happy to inform you, that the Government of the USSR is ready to establish normal diplomatic relations with the Government of the USA and to exchange ambassadors.

I also trust that the relations now established between our peoples may forever remain normal and friendly and that our nations henceforth may cooperate for their mutual benefit and for the preservation of world peace.

Roosevelt shook Litvinov's hand, and said a few gracious words about the Soviet Land and its diplomats. Litvinov replied in kind. Then they continued the talks, discussing particulars of the future relationship, the functions of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow and the Soviet Embassy in Washington. They spoke of the future trade between their countries, and, certainly, of the world situation and the events in Germany. Roosevelt was obviously reluctant to devote more attention to Germany than other countries, but Litvinov kept raising the matter again and again, stressing that Hitler Germany was the tensest of all flashpoints in the world, and that if that seat of the war danger was not checked, the world would be plunged

into war and the United States would hardly be able to stay out of it.

Public opinion experts, the U.S. President observed, estimated that 92 per cent of the world population were against war and only 8 per cent wanted it. Litvinov replied it was wrong to count the population of countries whose leaders were hatching war in those eight per cent. The war was being prepared by a handful of criminals, and if they were not stopped, the conflagration would be sure to engulf the whole world, the USA included.

During one of the last few conversations, the Americans arranged telephone connections with Moscow. Roosevelt asked Litvinov to be the first to open the Washington-Moscow line. Litvinov spoke from a downstairs White House phone.

At the Central Telegraph in Moscow, too, arrangements were being made. When they learned Litvinov would speak, his family was speedily informed. At Roosevelt's request, the Soviet diplomat's wife was called to the telephone.

The technical services in Washington and Moscow did their best for audibility to be good. But as often happened in those days, the users asked each other several times, "Can you hear me? Can you hear me?"

The conversation, which was in English, was recorded and broadcast over the radio, and has come down to us as one more reminder of those now far distant days:

Commissar Litvinov: Hello!

Ivy Litvinov: Hello darling! Hello, hello! I hear you beautifully. How are you?

Commissar Litvinov: Please speak slowly, will you?

Ivy Litvinov: Yes.

Commissar Litvinov: I am now in the White House.

Ivy Litvinov: Yes, I know.

Commissar Litvinov: I have just been talking to the President, and his last words were to give you his regards.

Ivy Litvinov: Thank you very much.

Commissar Litvinov: Mr. Skvirsky sends you his regards.

Ivy Litvinov: Thank you very much.

Commissar Litvinov: Everybody here is very sorry you did not come with me.

Ivy Litvinov: Oh!

Commissar Litvinov: Also President and Madame Roosevelt express their regrets that you did not accompany me.

Ivy Litvinov: That is very kind of them.

Commissar Litvinov: I am sorry, too.

Ivy Litvinov: Ah! I hope to come another time.

Commissar Litvinov: How are you?

Ivy Litvinov: Very well. How are you?

Commissar Litvinov: And the children?

Ivy Litvinov: Very well. Misha is also here and would like to speak a word to you.

Commissar Litvinov: Hello, Misha.

Misha: Hello.

Commissar Litvinov: How are your studies?

Misha: Very well.

Commissar Litvinov: Misha, Misha, can you hear me?

Misha: Yes, I can.

Commissar Litvinov: Are you all right?

Misha: Yes.

Commissar Litvinov: How are your studies?

Misha: They are very right.

Commissar Litvinov: Is Tania with you?

Misha: No.

Commissar Litvinov: And Tania?

Misha: No, only I and Mama. How are you, Papa?

Commissar Litvinov: I shall be here another week.

Misha: How is your toothache?

Commissar Litvinov (laughing): It is all right.

Ivy Litvinov: Misha has just come from school and wanted to speak to you. Tania is still at school and could not come. Are you there?

Commissar Litvinov: Yes.

Ivy Litvinov: And is everyone in good spirits?

Commissar Litvinov: Yes. What kind of weather are you having?

Ivy Litvinov: Beautiful clean snow, lovely snow. We can't believe it possible. What time are you having? Ten o'clock, isn't it?

A thunderstorm raged somewhere in the ocean. Regretfully, Litvinov put down the phone. He went upstairs to see Roosevelt. The President was leaning back in his wheelchair. He asked how the talk had gone. Litvinov said audibility had been splendid. Roosevelt smiled and said, "Mr. Litvinov, such a talk is your best propaganda. When Americans learn that the Bolshevik Commissar has a wife and children, that he's a family man, they'll respect both the Commissar and his land."

During Litvinov's conversation with the President, a State Depart-



ment official brought the keys to the building of the old Russian Embassy, which the tsarist government had once bought from U.S. millionaire George M. Pullman. When Litvinov took the keys, Roosevelt smiled and congratulated him.

Accompanied by Jessica Smith, an employee of the Soviet Information Centre, Litvinov and Skvirsky set out for the embassy building. It was in a sorry state. The "ambassador" of the Provisional Government, Bakhmetyev, had vacated it only a short time before. The building looked dead. The marble floors were chipped, with little pools of stagnant water in the depressions. Frayed old curtains hung on the windows and doors. Cobwebs were everywhere. Litvinov stood silently, surveying the scene. After a while, he asked Jessica Smith for the name of some leading U.S. architect, who should be commissioned to restore order on the embassy premises, and make them cheerful and sunny.

Despite frantic efforts of the foes of the negotiations, marked by malicious exercises of the yellow press, thousands of people expressed their liking for the Soviet Union. Letters and cables arrived in a stream. People gathered beside the White House and in the street where Litvinov had his residence. They came to Skvirsky's house to shake hands with the Soviet diplomat and send greetings to the Russian workers. Many asked for autographs.

Amusing little incidents occurred. One day a dentist came. He was born in Russia. He had heard Litvinov on the radio: it seemed that he lisped.

"I'll make a new set of teeth for you," he said. "They'll make your speech perfect. And since we're countrymen, I'll do it free of charge."

Litvinov had by then grown accustomed to the most unlikely requests and offers. Some were from the realm of fantasy, designed to improve the world. Others... Well, once, when Litvinov was leaving for Switzerland, he had received a letter from a Moscow watchmaker. "Since you're going to the country of clocks and watches," the letter said, "bring back some spare parts for me. I'll look after all your watches free for the rest of your life."

Litvinov never failed to answer letters, requests, and offers. To the author of a fantastic plan of rearranging the world he explained the futility of his designs. To the Moscow watchmaker, he brought back the desired spares. Neither did he wish to offend the Washington dentist, and declined his offer most politely.

After exchanging letters with Roosevelt, Litvinov spoke at the National Press Club to representatives of America's major newspapers

and agencies. The American papers called it the largest press conference of the decade.

The Soviet diplomat made a statement on his negotiations with the President. He said the peoples of the Soviet Union would receive the news of the resumption of diplomatic relations with sincere pleasure and stressed that possibilities were now opening for truly friendly relations and peaceful cooperation between the world's two largest republics. All honest and peace-loving people, all who were against ill-will, suspicion, hostility, and other abnormalities would be pleased.

The newsmen applauded, then fired questions, which Litvinov answered calmly and amiably.

"How will the establishment of diplomatic relations between America and the Soviet Union affect the Third International?"

"The Third International is not mentioned in the documents," Litvinov countered. "One should not ascribe to documents what they do not contain."

"Aren't the Russians spreading propaganda in the United States of America?"

"I would ask the journalist who put that question, in the presence of all, to give me the addresses of the Soviet citizens who are spreading Soviet propaganda in the United States."

The hall rang with applause.

On November 23, the Soviet diplomat completed all his affairs in Washington. The parting with Roosevelt was friendly. The President made Litvinov a gift: a portable radio set, which was a rarity in those days. He said he hoped they'd see each other again. Neither Roosevelt nor Litvinov could know then, of course, that the world would be engulfed in war eight years later.

On November 24, a banquet was held for the Soviet Commissar in New York. He had had no chance to see the city when he disembarked there after the Atlantic crossing. Now, he intended to make up for it and go sightseeing with Divilkovsky. They visited the 102-storey Empire State Building, went up to the observation platform, but kept the impressions that magnificent piece of engineering made on them to themselves until they had descended.

"I wonder whether the plumbing will still work if there's a revolution in America, and whether people living in the upper storeys will have to climb the stairs since the lift is forever on the blink?" Litvinov jested.

Time and again, he had spoken crossly of the clumsy ways of Soviet managers, and of their inability to use the enormous possi-

bilities of the revolution. Their astonishing ability to turn every trifle into a big problem angered him immensely.

The banquet, held under the auspices of the American-Russian Trade Chamber, was in the afternoon. All people who mattered did their best to come. All nationalities inhabiting the giant city were represented. It was an all-American vanity fair. There, Litvinov would deliver his last speech of the visit. Litvinov—agent of Lenin's *Iskra*, gun-runner, professional Russian revolutionary who had seen the inside of prisons in several countries, one of those who had helped tear down capitalism in Russia, now a recognised diplomat, was to say what he thought of the state of world affairs. He delivered his speech in English, off the cuff, addressing the large, many-faced audience as a spokesman of the new world confident of its future.

He mentioned his talks with the President.

"Somehow," he said, "neither of us was in a hurry to conclude. I think we both felt the approach of the moment when mutual obligations would be accepted, and were trying to utilize the remaining period of freedom to conduct a little propaganda between ourselves. The President appealed to me with something like religious propaganda. Although we were hardly able to convert each other, I liked the President's method of discussing problems. I never doubted the results. From the moment the President characterised the absence of mutual relations as not normal, I was sure he would do all he could to remedy matters.

"The upheavals produced by the World War in the political, economic, and social order of the capitalist world, continue to exert their deleterious influence.

"Preparations for new wars are being made in the open. Not only has the enemy resumed and accelerated the arms race, but what is probably even worse, the rising generation is being trained in a spirit that idealises war.

"Typical of such militarist education is the medieval quasi-scientific theory that one nation is superior to others and has the right to rule over and even exterminate them. Songs, music, literature, science—all this is made to serve the militarist conditioning of the youth."

The Soviet diplomat spoke of the failure of the disarmament conference, of the continued dwindling of world trade and the millions of unemployed, then rapped out to the silent hall: "All this gives us little hope of an improvement in the economic situation. Against this dismal background my land stands out like a ray of light."

Litvinov told the American businessmen how the Soviet Union had secured its industrial, technical, and scientific progress, how it built up its culture, its health services, and how it had fought illiteracy. He spoke for a long time. And the New York millionaires listened with rapt attention.

Litvinov sailed for Europe on board the swift Italian ship, *Conte di Savoia*. In honour of the Soviet diplomat and his country, the liner hoisted a red flag.

From early morning a huge crowd had gathered. Litvinov, accompanied by U.S. policemen, made his way with some difficulty to the gangplank and went on deck. Thousands of people waved goodbye to him. "Long live Soviet Russia!" people shouted on all sides. Also on deck were Postmaster General James A. Farley, who was going on a vacation to Europe on the same ship, and diplomats from Washington who had come to see Litvinov off.

Litvinov walked up to the microphone. He thanked the gathering for the warm farewell and its affection for his country. The attending newspapermen wanted him to give a final press conference. Litvinov said curtly he was pleased with his visit to America.

At last, it was five minutes past twelve. Majestically, the *Conte di Savoia* steamed out of the harbour.

The *New York Sun* reported that owing to the commotion created by Litvinov's departure, the crowd had ignored Postmaster General James A. Farley and other officials. They were forgotten, except by the policemen.

The Atlantic Ocean was restless, with a leaden winter sky overhead. On the fifth day, the voyagers saw the Azores outlined on the horizon, then passed through the Strait of Gibraltar.

The events of those days, and what had happened in New York and during the Atlantic crossing, were described by Divilkovsky in a letter to his wife:

"I wrote this letter on board the *Conte di Savoia* in sight of the Azores, and will post it in Gibraltar. The 29th of November, 1933.

"To be sure, neither the date nor the place of writing are precise. It is now 7 p.m., November 29, in New York, approximately midnight where we are now, and 3 a.m., November 30, in Moscow. As for the place where we are, we did not really see the Azores—just a dim outline and lighthouses far to the south. We'll reach Gibraltar tomorrow night. At the moment, we are some 300 miles southeast of Portugal. I've figured out, by the way, that I have never been so far south before. I can only regret that I'll not get to see the Southern Cross.



"Sent you a couple of postcards from New York, where we spent two nights and a day. On the first night, we inspected the new Rockefeller Radio City, a huge conglomeration of skyscrapers, radio stations, and cinemas. It contains the world's largest cinema seating 6,000, which was full at that moment. We were taken up and down the enormous building, and then shown newsreels of ourselves. We had no time to see the feature film to the end. It was *Little Women* by Louisa Alcott, which you must have read as a child. The second night we were at the new Waldorf-Astoria (65 storeys high), where 1,600 people feted Litvinov at a gala dinner. They played the American national anthem and then the Internationale. I'm sure that the Waldorf-Astoria heard it for the first time, and most of the guests probably did not know what it was. Litvinov made a fine speech.

"During our one day in New York we went sightseeing. Litvinov managed to see quite a lot, but I had time only for a spell at the television salon, and then climbed to the top of the Empire State Building, which is taller than the Eiffel Tower. Mailed a postcard to you from there. There was a fog below, and we saw nothing. Skvirsky and I went off to buy me a suitcase, and then shopping. But the shopping led to nothing, for the main ingredient, money, was lacking.

"Speaking of money: the man on my right at the banquet table on Friday night was the board chairman of Chase National, the world's biggest bank. He is a man of about 45, a hundred per cent American, and has been doing business with us for a long time, though he knows as little about our country as a trained seal from Franz Josef Land. He asked me the most monstrous questions, and in the end wanted to know how much I earned. I told him. How many dollars did that make? I said two hundred. He said with a smirk he received ten thousand. I wanted to say I wouldn't change places with him anyway, but didn't. Then he asked what sort of apartment we had, and asked about my wife and children, and servants. I answered all his questions. He showed an interest in you, said his wife was the same age, and that they had the same number of children. He questioned me about you, about your life, and your clothes. I answered all his questions patiently, while he kept begging my pardon for being so inquisitive. Finally, on getting all the information he wanted, he said he hoped I would not be offended if he did something nice for my wife. The owner of New York's biggest department store, he said, was a member of his board. He would introduce me to him tomorrow morning if I let him. At the department store, he said, I could pick the best and the most expensive things for my wife. Chase Bank would foot the bill.

"We had conversed in English up to then, but here I addressed

his other neighbour, a member of the Amtorg Board, Rosenstein, and asked him to interpret for me. Then I said my wife would be most grateful if the gentleman contributed any extra money he had on her behalf to some fund in aid of New York's unemployed. Rosenstein did as he was asked, and the subject was closed. In the end, saying good-bye, he mumbled something about my flash of wit. The unemployed, he said, would get nothing in your name, and I am sure, you would not be sorry for spurning his offer.

"The following morning, a Saturday, we toured downtown New York in a car (though, I must say, we didn't see more than a hundredth of the city), dropped in at Amtorg, where we had a quick meeting, and then set out for the ship in the company of a State Department official. Again crowds of people, journalists, cameramen—and again a lot of shouting, a lot of applause, and an indescribable fuss. To tell the truth, this whole visit has been a triumph for Litvinov (i. e., the USSR).

"This is the fifth day of our voyage. Tomorrow, a Thursday, I'll mail this letter from Gibraltar, and on Saturday noon (December the 2nd) we'll be in Naples, and that evening in Rome. Hope to find letters from you in Rome. We'll probably be in Berlin on the 7th and 8th, and in Moscow on the 10th.

"The voyage has been good again, without the slightest hint of any rolling or pitching. I'm evidently not fated to have a taste of it. The weather is so warm we're keeping all the portholes open, and have discarded blankets for the night. To think there's deep snow at home!

"The ship is huge, one of the latest (*Conte di Savoia* was built in Trieste in 1932), with lots of new gimmicks, including gyrostabilisers, a device that keeps the ship steady by counteracting its rolling motion from side to side. The finish of the various first-class salons is the peak of luxury and Italian bad taste—marble, gilding, paintings, statues, and the like. Clean and uncrowded in the second and third class, which I didn't expect. True, passengers number less than half the rated capacity. Need I say that I enjoy the Italian cuisine, with a predilection for spaghetti of all varieties, even with a bit of slightly diluted Chianti. It's a forgivable luxury, for, in general, I behave very modestly when abroad.

"I don't want to make the letter too long, and, besides, it wouldn't be right to describe our life in a letter, but there is an episode I can't help telling you about. While on our way to America, we had many amusing encounters. A sports champion approached Umansky once, and offered to buy a monopoly on whisky imports to Russia. But the funniest episode involved me personally. (By the way, did I write you

that Umansky stayed on in Washington with an acute influenza complication, and that Litvinov and I are travelling alone, not counting the accompanying journalists?) I received a note from the purser that a Hungarian newspaperwoman, travelling second class, wished to see me. I stated the time when I'd receive her. She turned out to be a heavily made-up young woman of about twenty-two, with pencil-line eyebrows. She showed credentials from some doubtful Hungarian periodical, and explained that, in effect, she wasn't a real journalist yet. If she managed to get an interview with Litvinov, she added, her career would be made. I said I was sorry but there could be no interview. Then she said she was immensely interested in my country, and asked me to devote some time to her, so she could question me about it. I refused an appointment. All the same, she came after lunch and began firing questions, such, for example, as whether women in the Soviet Union all wore the same dresses. Then she declared Europe and America were not to her taste, and she wanted a visa to settle in the USSR. I explained in the plainest of terms that the last thing we needed was her presence. Whereupon she stated that she'd marry some engineer going to Russia, and asked me in the same breath for my Moscow address, and if she could see me in Rome. I said I was no engineer, and no bachelor, and took to my heels. That night she came to the dance, and kept leering at me, so that once more I had to seek safety in flight. It is, of course, possible that she was a decoy, and so forth. But I rather think she was simply a fool."

A few days later, Divilkovsky wrote a postcard aboard ship:

"December 1, 1933. Approaching Naples. We'll berth tomorrow. The weather has changed: no sun, and a choppy sea. The Mediterranean isn't what it usually is. Pity we won't see Naples beneath a blue sky."

Litvinov made a short stopover in Naples to see the ruins of Pompeii, and also visited Sorrento. In Rome, at the Palazzo di Venezia, he had a talk with Mussolini. There were banquets and speeches.

Little Austria flashed by, and they arrived in Berlin, with Gestapo men all over the station platform. People from the Soviet Embassy brought the latest papers, and Litvinov had an opportunity to see what the reaction to his Washington mission had been in various capitals.

The U.S. press, which gave the talks and their results wide coverage, was conflicting in tenor. The isolationist papers belittled the Soviet diplomatic success, and censured Roosevelt for having let Litvinov "twist him round his little finger". But most of the reactions were sound. Walter Duranty, who described the agreement as a "Yankee horse trade", admitted that Litvinov was "a pretty shrewd trader

himself". One should not forget, Duranty wrote, that the blood of Dutch traders and New England businessmen flowed in Roosevelt's veins, while Litvinov belonged to a race that had always been famous in commerce. "To sum up," Duranty wrote, "I should say Litvinov is returning home with a pretty fat Christmas turkey."

Papers in Paris, London, Stockholm, Tokyo, Warsaw, Madrid, and elsewhere, spoke of a Soviet diplomatic breakthrough. Many papers tried to analyse the event. Nobody could tell then, of course, that the talks had laid the foundation for the wartime anti-Nazi coalition. But it was clear that the document signed in Washington was no pedestrian instrument, and represented a major historic advance. For the Soviet Union, everybody admitted, it was yet another considerable achievement.

Even Nazi journalists admitted the enormous success scored by Soviet diplomacy. The Big Business newspaper, *Frankfurter Zeitung*, wrote: "The Soviet Union has torn down the last of the barriers that had surrounded it."

On December 9, Litvinov was back in Moscow. His colleagues of the Foreign Commissariat, foreign diplomats, and journalists, had come to the railway station to meet him. The day's *Pravda* had a front-page cartoon depicting a smiling Litvinov with a briefcase inscribed, "Soviet policy of peace", and next to him a rueful militarist beside a gun.

The 4th session of the Central Executive Committee opened two days before New Year's Eve 1934. On the opening day, Kalinin gave the floor to the Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He was met with a rousing ovation, and spoke for a long time: a full hour. It was one of the most important speeches in his diplomatic career. He described the prevailing world situation, and explained why the United States had recognised the Soviet Union.

"For fifteen years," he said, "the USA was the only major power that stubbornly refused to have formal relations with the Soviet Union, and, indeed, to admit that it existed. It refused to recognise the October Revolution and the changes it generated in the Soviet Union. In its eyes, there was still Kerensky's Provisional Government, with whose agents it had official intercourse until just recently. It was obstinate. But not because its points of disagreement with us were greater than those of other countries, or because it had suffered more from our revolutionary legislation. In substance, it only continued the war that the capitalist world had declared against the new, Soviet system after the October Revolution. It was a war against the peaceful coexistence of the two systems. Seeing the other capitalist countries abandon the battlefield one after another, America seemed to say:



I understand, you're weak, you're tottering, you're suffering losses and have to give up, while I am strong enough to fight on alone. It stuck to its guns for fifteen years, until it, too, abandoned the struggle. That is why, comrades, my exchange of letters with President Roosevelt on November 16 should be seen as something more than mere recognition by one more great power. It is the collapse of the last frontier, the last front, in the capitalist world's offensive against us in the form of non-recognition and boycott."

Litvinov was no public speaker. Had he lived in Rome two thousand years ago, he would not have attracted more than a handful of listeners in the square outside the Forum. He did not arouse people by the timbre or modulation of his voice, but reached them by his unassailable logic, the power of his convictions. He reached into the hearts and minds of his audience, marshalling attention, trust, and respect.

He spoke for a long time more—of the processes that were going on in capitalist society. He said that the era of bourgeois pacifism was over, that the capitalist world was again preparing for war, and that the war was being started by Hitler Germany and imperial Japan. The breaches of peace would be directed above all against the Soviet Union, and the army and people should be told about it.

That was on December 29, 1933. The sixteenth year of Soviet power was ending.

In early January 1934, Stalin questioned Litvinov about his mission in Washington. Litvinov gave him a detailed account of his talks with President Roosevelt and other American statesmen, and, among other things, of the opportunities for trading with the United States. This last aroused Stalin's special interest.

After their conversation, Stalin invited Litvinov to henceforth use the government *dacha* in Firсановка, near Moscow.\* It had been Stalin's *dacha* and would now be at Litvinov's disposal. This was obviously meant to let Litvinov know of Stalin's faith in him.

When spring came Litvinov did make use of the *dacha* in Firсановка.

\* In 1987, I was invited to the *dacha* (Russian for countryhouse) in Firсановка. I was there twice. The estate manager asked me if I could write its history, for the local people still called the *dacha* Litvinovka.—*Author*.

## Chapter 9

### THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Litvinov plunged into the pile of work that had accumulated during his absence. Among the many papers, he found a cable from Alexandra Kollontai, the Soviet ambassador in Stockholm. She congratulated him on the success of the Washington talks, and asked for help in resolving some official problems. On December 20, 1933, Litvinov sent her a friendly letter.

"Dear Alexandra," he wrote. "I'm up to my neck in work. Our diplomatic efforts are only just beginning. Never before were they as important as they are now. Besides, I have Bullitt on my back, and have to devote much attention to him: he considers himself more than a mere ambassador, but also my personal friend. Thanks for the congratulations."

Litvinov's observation that diplomatic work was only just beginning, was really a hyperbole. Soviet diplomacy had by then scored many a victory. Yet there was sense in what he said. Hitler's Nazism had slithered onto the world arena. Germany kept making louder and louder noises about wanting to "replay" the war. True, the military alliance that would soon come into the world as the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis, was not yet in sight. But the experienced eye of a diplomat could already discern its possible emergence.

The 17th Congress of the Communist Party was to open at the end of January 1934 in Moscow. The preparations for it were at their height. Litvinov was elected delegate to the Party Conference of Moscow's Dzerzhinsky District, and then to the all-Moscow Conference. Here he was elected delegate to the Party Congress, which eventually elected him member of the Party's Central Committee.

Litvinov spoke about the congress at a meeting of Party activists of the Foreign Commissariat.

Never before did the Soviet diplomatic service face as complicated a task as it did now: that of holding back the ferocious pressures of Hitler Germany. To do so, it set out to create instruments of international security. It was important for the Soviet Union to be admitted to the League of Nations. That international organisation

created at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919-20, had begun to play a visible role in the life of nations. Ruling the roost there were France and Britain. This made the League obviously anti-Soviet.

But Hitler's appearance on the world scene forced many bourgeois politicians to look at the Soviet Union with a less jaundiced eye. Hitler's diplomats, meanwhile, set about destroying the League of Nations. They were bent on disposing of it even though it was a weak obstacle to aggression. German diplomats of the old school were recalled. Nadolny, who had represented Germany at the Disarmament Conference and was then appointed Ambassador to Moscow, was, in effect, retired. Robert Ley, head of the Nazi Labour Front, came from Berlin to take his seat at the International Labour Office.

The eternally drunk Nazi began his diplomatic career by beating up the doorman of the Palace of Nations, and by taking charge of Nadolny's car, saying to its dumbfounded driver, in so many words, that he could tell Ambassador Nadolny to kiss his ass.

S.S. Gruppenführer Reinhard Heydrich, later the butcher of Prague eliminated by Czech patriots in 1942, was another German diplomatic representative in Geneva, serving as expert on paramilitary organisations.

In the spring of 1933, Japan withdrew from the League, and Germany followed suit in autumn. The Japanese government and Hitler thought the League of Nations would fall to pieces after their withdrawal. In their secret diplomatic chancelleries and general staffs, a new war was already being hatched. Yet criminal complacency reigned in the League of Nations. Baron Wolfgang Gans Putlitz, a German diplomat, wrote: "A peculiar atmosphere of something artificial and unreal reigned in Geneva. The cosmopolitan vanity fair, a centre of intrigue, was a strange contrast to the background in which it was set, the old city of Calvin with its Swiss bourgeois *Gemütlichkeit* and its rigidly sober puritan morals... Diplomats and delegates from all over the world relished its atmosphere, especially during the warm season, and behaved as they would at a first-class holiday resort. Excellencies and other dignitaries from all countries of the world came to the boulevard beside the lake, and one observed scenes reminiscent of a Vienna comic opera. They asked each other about the health of their spouses, the results of the latest obesity cure, exchanged information about wines and the culinary expertise of restaurateurs in Paris or Karlsbad, and discussed the latest scandal in Cannes or San Sebastian. Each and everyone of them most delicately avoided any serious subject that might in the slightest be unpleasant to the other."

At this time, the Soviet Union, which had repeatedly censured the League of Nations for its inactivity, decided to back it up, to

breathe new life into it, to make it work for peace. It was a move of flexible diplomacy, a dialectical act suiting the world situation.

At the end of May 1934, Litvinov addressed the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference in Geneva. The Soviet diplomat's speech, which contained a clear peace programme, elicited a worldwide response. The weekly *Journal de Nation* wrote that nothing could demonstrate the far-reaching evolution of European politics more clearly than the impatience with which Litvinov's speech was awaited. The Disarmament Conference and public opinion were counting on the Soviet delegation to help find a way out of the impasse. The article described Litvinov's speech as an act of the utmost courtesy, and said it was like a maiden speech at the League of Nations. The League of Nations, it said, could now declare, *Dignus est entrare*.

Indeed, the League had a much bigger stake in having the Soviet Union buttress it by its authority than the Soviet Union had in becoming its member.

Under the League's Covenant, any country wishing to join was to apply for admission, answer the questions of the League, and promise to abide by its Covenant. The application then went to the Political Commission, which decided if the country deserved to be admitted. At least two-thirds of the member-countries should be for, or the application was turned down.

The Soviet Union was not ready to follow this procedure. If it were turned down, Soviet prestige would suffer. It still had many enemies, and they were strong. In the circumstances, Soviet diplomacy had to show the maximum flexibility and inventiveness.

Many Western statesmen were aware that the League's authority had to be shored up. This applied above all to Louis Barthou, the French Foreign Minister, and Eduard Beneš, his Czechoslovak colleague.

Litvinov had met Beneš and Barthou before 1934. He knew he could count on the Foreign Minister of the Slav country. Though inconsistent in his views, Beneš was deeply aware of the Nazi peril to Czechoslovakia. The relationship with Barthou was less clear. He had played a most negative role in Genoa. His anti-Soviet manoeuvres had then helped to isolate the Soviet Republic politically. But the times had changed, and with them the outlook. After 1933, Barthou became one of the most consistent advocates of rapprochement with the Soviet Union. Litvinov saw that Barthou would be glad to buttress the League of Nations, to save it from collapse. Small wonder that the Nazi secret service organised the assassination of Barthou by foreign mercenaries some time later. He was shot to death in Marseilles together with King Alexander I of Yugoslavia.



Litvinov did not mince words in telling Barthou and Beneš about the Soviet position:

"We are not going to beg the League of Nations to admit us. If you think it'll help strengthen the League, you'll have to do the spadework yourselves. Let the League ask the Soviet Union to join. We'll be glad to."

The League of Nations had 51 members. Any country wanting to join the League had to have at least two-thirds of its members, or 34 countries, vote for it. Among those who were against admitting the Soviet Union were Switzerland, Portugal, the Argentine, the Netherlands, and Belgium. How serious their arguments were may be judged from the utterances of, say, the Argentine spokesman. During the 1917 events in Petrograd, thieves had stolen two suitcases from the third secretary of the Argentine Embassy. The diplomat complained to the Soviet authorities. But the suitcases were not found. He was in a rage. So now, at the League of Nations, his countryman declared he would vote against admitting the Soviet Union, because it did not protect private property.

Beneš and Barthou spoke to diplomats of other countries. Difficulties kept arising in various quarters. The government of Finland, which was then anti-Soviet, said it would vote against the admission of the Soviet Union. The Soviet envoy in Helsinki, Boris Stein, was given instructions to protest and say "the Finns are hiding a rock in their bosom". Stein must have said it more euphemistically. Krestinsky, then deputising for Litvinov in Moscow, sent instructions to pass on the Soviet opinion verbatim, to give the Finns to understand that the phrase, "hiding a rock in their bosom", came from the top leadership. He asked the envoy to let him know how the Finns took it. The Soviet demarche helped. The Finns withdrew their objections.

On September 15, 1934, thirty League of Nations delegates cabled an invitation for the Soviet Union to join the international body and "contribute its valuable cooperation". The delegates of another four countries made clear through usual diplomatic channels that they would vote for admitting the Soviet Union. On the same day, the Soviet government replied in a letter to the chairman of the League Assembly that the Soviet Union was always open to any proposals for international cooperation in the interest of peace. On September 18, a three-man Soviet delegation (Maxim Litvinov, Vladimir Potemkin, the Soviet envoy in Italy, and Boris Stein, the envoy in Finland) was to go through the formal procedure of admission.

Litvinov decided that the Soviet delegation should appear in Geneva just before the voting. But how to be and not to be in Geneva?

A geographical factor helped solve this intricate problem. Geneva, a Swiss city, is surrounded on three sides by French territory. Only a narrow strip of land connects it with Switzerland. On the other side of the Lake of Geneva is Evian, a French health resort. That was where Litvinov and Potemkin went. Stein had been given instructions to go from Helsinki directly to Geneva. A cable caught up with him in Berlin, suggesting he should not appear in Geneva until September 18.

The situation was complicated by the fact that the Berlin train arrived in Geneva at noon, while the voting in the League of Nations would take place at 6.00 p.m. Stein was known in Geneva, where he had attended disarmament conferences as member of the Soviet delegation. So, when journalists, who had recognised him at the Geneva railway station, came to his hotel, Stein said, "Sorry, Soviet delegate Stein has not yet arrived." The dumbfounded journalists retired.

Ivy, Litvinov's wife, told me what went on in Evian on that day, September 18.

"Maxim was tense, but disguised it as best he could. His self-control failed him just once—when Marcel Rosenberg, Soviet chargé d'affaires in France, suddenly appeared in Evian, thinking he might be useful. Litvinov asked why he had come, for he had not been summoned.

"There were two reasons for this reaction: first, Rosenberg had come without permission, and, second, Litvinov detested people, especially diplomats, who wanted to be in the limelight. Rosenberg was one of them. Shortly before, the Soviet envoy in Paris, Valerian Dovgalevsky, whom Litvinov was very fond of, had died. Rosenberg, who became chargé d'affaires, sent Litvinov a coded telegram: 'The papers here are speculating if I'll be appointed envoy. Should I deny the rumours?' Litvinov's reply was brief: 'Not all idiotic rumours must be denied.'

"Rosenberg was sent packing back to Paris.

"Litvinov looked through the papers, walked up and down the room, then suggested going to a picture to kill time. We went to see some new hit.

"On the way back we dropped in at the Luna Park. Litvinov mumbled to himself, 'I hope Beneš does not let us down.' But when the time came to leave for Geneva, Litvinov seemed to be his cool self again."

Evian was a ten minutes' drive from Geneva. A car was waiting for Litvinov outside the hotel. At 5 p.m. sharp the League's master of ceremonies was to come to the specified Geneva hotel and invite the Soviet delegation to the Palace of Nations.

Stein recollected: "On the way from the hotel, the master of ce-

remonies told us about the ritual of admission. We would enter a lobby leading directly to the big hall. After the voting, the counters would announce the result. The chairman would say the Soviet Union was joining the League of Nations on the basis of such-and-such paragraph of the Covenant. He would then say he welcomed the admission of the Soviet Union to the League of Nations, and would make a speech, ending with the following words: 'I invite the gentlemen of the Soviet delegation to take their seats in the League of Nations.' That would be the moment the doors opened and the three Soviet delegates entered the hall.

"We came at the appointed time, were brought to a round lobby, and led up to the door of the conference hall. The master of ceremonies was excited and tense, and peered through a crack in the door into the hall several times. When he had done it once too often, Litvinov walked past him coolly across the hall to his seat. We—Potemkin and I—hurried in his wake. The whole League of Nations was looking at us. There were friendly nods of welcome. When we took our seats, the chairman had just finished announcing the results of the vote, but had not finished his speech. He was not quick enough to grasp that the final sentence, the invitation for us to enter and take our seats, was no longer necessary since we had already done so, and read it out aloud.

"One of the attending journalists jumped at the chance to say the Bolsheviks had been true to form and barged in before being invited. But that was only a reflection of the feelings of those who had not wanted the Soviet Union to join the League. The overwhelming majority had voted for its admission.

When the admission ceremony was over, Litvinov expressed his thanks to the French government, which had been the first to propose that the League should invite the Soviet Union, said a few heartfelt words about Barthou, and thanked Beneš for his sincere backing. He then warned he would not pull punches and say why the Soviet Union was admitted to the League only in its fifteenth year. Those who had created the League, he said, and who conceived it as a peace instrument, did not want that peace to extend to the new, Soviet, state. They had prayed for it to collapse. But in vain. The Soviet Union endured.

Litvinov said the Soviet Union could not accept all the resolutions of the League of Nations, and considered its Covenant far from perfect. He pointed out, among other things, that the 12th and 15th Articles of the Covenant legalised war in some cases, and that Article 23 did not acknowledge the racial equality of all peoples. He said the Soviet Union appreciated the idea of nations uniting, because it

was itself a league of nations, a country inhabited by 185 nations and ethnic groups.

Litvinov set forth Lenin's principles of peaceful coexistence, and called attention to the dangerous tendencies in world affairs. The war forces, he said, were preparing a new slaughter. Let no one think, he added, that the Soviet Union was overestimating the League of Nations in this complicated situation.

"Gentlemen," Litvinov said, "I do not overestimate the ability of the League of Nations to organise peace. I am probably more aware of its limitations than any of you. I know the League of Nations has no instruments to abolish wars. But I am convinced that given resolve and amiable cooperation on the part of all its members, a whole lot can be done at every given moment to reduce the chances of war. That is a noble objective, which, if achieved, will yield incalculable benefits to humanity."

The Soviet Union's admission to the League of Nations was welcomed all over the world. Letters and cables were evidence that working people in all countries pinned their hopes of peace on the Soviet Union.

The secretary of the 16,000-strong organisation of friends of the Soviet Union in Holland cabled Litvinov that on behalf of the public in his country and on behalf of mass meetings in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and other cities, his organisation expressed its indignation over the stand of the Dutch representative who had voted against the Soviet Union's admission.

A cable from Zurich: "The Zurich workers send fraternal greetings to the country fighting for world peace and disarmament. They censure the warlike posture of the reactionary Swiss government."

The World Women's Committee hailed the Soviet Union's admission to the League of Nations. "The Soviet Union," it said, "is the key factor in the struggle for peace."

Telegrams came from Bernard Shaw, Heinrich Mann, Albert Einstein, Romania's Foreign Minister Nicolae Titulescu, Colonel House and Henry Stimson of the United States, Philip Noel-Baker, the British public leader, and Edouard Herriot and other French statesmen.

Many of the messages were addressed personally to Litvinov. One of them is worth citing in full, for it came from that fine Russian humanist, Nikolai Rubakin, who had earned fame and renown far outside his country. At that time, he was Director of the International Institute of Psychology in Lausanne:

"Deeply esteemed Maxim Maximovich, permit me to hail the Soviet Union's admission to the League of Nations. As an old Socialist and a convinced advocate of world peace, I cannot but welcome



this. Not because I think the League of Nations is a gate to paradise, but because I see the invitation as a major victory of the Soviet policy of peace over the imperialistic policy of the capitalist states.

"The invitation for the Soviet Union to join the League of Nations also shows how much stronger the country building a socialist culture with the conscious support of the working people has become.

"However great the successes of Soviet foreign policy are in connection with the country's growing power, I cannot help giving due credit to your own diplomatic art and your extraordinary political and historical intuition.

"It is thanks to you, in your office as leader of the Soviet Union's foreign policy, that the socialist vision of the world backed powerfully by the working people of all countries has scored this enormous moral and political victory, representing socialism's new stage on the road to a new world."

Almost immediately after the Soviet Union's admission to the League of Nations, its representative was given the post of Deputy Secretary-General of the League.

At that time, the Soviet Union was the only socialist country in the world. Two worlds were represented in the Palace of Nations: fifty-one bourgeois and one socialist state. Besides, technology was a far cry from what it is now. One could not expect to get immediate and prompt instructions from one's government. Mostly, one had to make one's own decisions on the spot, without delay.

Henry Roberts, a prominent U.S. historian, wrote of Litvinov that his stocky non-proletarian frame radiated common sense and workmanship.

Quite true. Litvinov's outer appearance could well have been that of a respectable bourgeois diplomat. Indeed, at one time, Litvinov had had to explain publicly why a Soviet diplomat should dress well. In the mid-twenties, people wondered why Soviet diplomats wore tails to receptions. People wanted to know if Soviet diplomats were going bourgeois? Litvinov wrote in *Vechernaya Moskva* that a Soviet diplomat dealing with foreign statesmen was compelled to wear tails—a fact, he added, which did not alter his outlook.

And Litvinov proved it. Bourgeois students of the history of the League of Nations refer almost unanimously to the forcefulness of Soviet diplomacy. Nowadays, the long succession of Litvinov's statements and speeches in the League's Assembly and Council, and at conferences and committee meetings, cannot be read without delight, writes F.R. Walters. Nothing in the annals of the League could equal his common sense, frankness, and precise judgement, his justified criticism and sure-fire foresight.

Litvinov's appearances in the League of Nations were always a big event. The foes of the Soviet Union feared him. If a speaker ventured to slander the Soviet Union, Litvinov immediately asked for the floor. His retort was always pitiless, destroying the speaker with deadly sarcasm and incontrovertible logic. Many simply would not risk speaking in his presence, and waited till he happened to be out of Geneva.

Litvinov's magic was not, of course, due exclusively to his personality. He was doughty and resolute in face of bourgeois diplomats because he represented a socialist state whose main purpose on the international scene was to make peace secure for all nations. And after the masses had laboured to turn backward Russia into a strong socialist state, the foundation for the political conceptions of Soviet diplomacy grew still stronger.

Speaking of Litvinov's activity in the League of Nations, Anastas Mikoyan said in a special interview with your author:

"In the League of Nations Litvinov dwarfed the most eminent bourgeois diplomats. The League was a new phase in our diplomacy. We were there on an equal footing with the major capitalist states that had only a short time before refused to recognize us. Litvinov's definition of aggression was classic. No one has produced anything clearer and more precise either before or after Litvinov."

The five years from 1934 to September 1939, when Hitler Germany started the Second World War, abounded in dramatic events and situations that called for mobility, firmness, insight, and the ability to expose hostile schemes, to manoeuvre and to attack.

In those years, Litvinov spent a lot of time in Geneva. His route there lay through Berlin. At the Berlin railway station he would be met by members of the Soviet Embassy and by foreign correspondents. Litvinov jested, smiled, but almost never granted interviews. Gestapo and SS-men, who were out in force, did not leave the platform until the train pulled out. But when necessary, Litvinov stopped over in the German capital for official talks.

Since about the end of 1935, Litvinov's route to Geneva changed. He travelled via Vienna, sometimes stopping over in Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, where he conferred with Soviet diplomats from neighbouring countries.

Litvinov's way of life in Geneva did not change. True, he stopped at the Richmond, which became the residence of Soviet diplomats, rather than the boarding-house he had patronised earlier. As usual, the evenings were spent drafting the next day's speeches. Andrew Rothstein, a British Communist who was then TASS correspondent

in Geneva, was usually asked to look at the drafts. Rothstein recollects: Litvinov would ask me to see if there was anything that grated on my ear, anything I thought should be improved, changed or deleted—and to tell him.

Litvinov also had contacts with the *doyen* of the journalists' corps in Geneva, a man named Dell, once prominent in the British labour movement (mentioned in one of Engels's letters to Sorge) and editor of the *People's Press*, a British trade union newspaper. Dell was a faithful Socialist, and a Soviet sympathiser. Every time he came to Geneva, Litvinov usually had a long talk with Dell, pumping him for information about the mood of the other League delegates, and the like.

When he anticipated an especially hard clash the next day, Litvinov would go for a walk in the quiet Geneva streets. On one such walk he met Bruce Lockhart, the former British agent for whom he had been exchanged in 1918. They spoke of the weather and the general climate in Geneva.

"You'd probably like to know, Mr. Litvinov, that the redoubtable Dzerzhinsky himself interrogated me," Lockhart said.

"What of it?"

"He treated me like a gentleman."

"I must say, Brixton Prison left no pleasant memories," Litvinov retorted, and added politely, "though to be fair, the other European prisons I'd known were even worse."

The two men parted.

Frightful things began to happen. In the early hours of October 3, 1935, Italy fell upon Ethiopia. As in September 1931, when Japan invaded Manchuria, the League did nothing, aside from recording the breaching of its Covenant. Then Britain, France, and the United States had prevailed on China not to declare a state of war with Japan, saying this would make it easier to negotiate with the Japanese.

Now, with the Soviet Union in the League, this method of appeasing the aggressor would not do. The League was compelled to pass a resolution that one of its members had breached the Covenant by starting hostilities against another League member. This automatically invoked Article 16, which envisaged sanctions against the aggressor.

The Soviet public was outraged by Italy's aggression, and showed every sympathy for the distant African state. The newspapers reported that the Ethiopians were resisting stoutly. Soviet Academician Nikolai Vavilov, who had spent some months in Ethiopia shortly before the Italian invasion, covering some 2,000 km and collecting more than 6,000 plant samples, wrote a series of articles for *Izvestia*. He concluded

it with the following words: "The Soviet Union says, let free and independent Ethiopia live on and use its natural wealth as it sees fit."

Soviet diplomacy did its utmost to check the aggressor. Britain, on the other hand, along with the French, wanted Italy to become more deeply involved in Ethiopia. The sanctions imposed on Italy were ineffective.

Litvinov spoke thrice on this score in the League of Nations. The serene atmosphere that reigned in the League was disturbed by the voice of the representative of the peoples of the Soviet Union. Litvinov addressed the League Council on September 5, 1935:

"I, as well as many of my colleagues, have, in this given instance, to speak on a question which does not directly concern the interests of our countries but which, depending on one or other decision, may have the most dire consequences for the whole of international life, for the fate of the League of Nations, for the cause of universal peace, and thus sooner or later, also for our countries."

The same ideas resounded even more distinctly in Litvinov's other speeches. A closer look will show that what he said concerned not only Ethiopia. He saw farther ahead. He saw the threat of war for all nations. Diplomatic usage prevented him from referring directly to Hitler, but Hitler was clearly whom he meant. On September 14, 1935, speaking in the League Assembly, he showed the underlying causes of aggression, and the League's reluctance to deal with burning problems, of which disarmament was the most urgent.

Litvinov used the League to attract world attention to the events in Africa, and showed they could spread to Europe. He spoke of security and of those who were undermining it. He spoke of the regional pacts that the Soviet Union had concluded and that were shoring up European security. Addressing the League Assembly, he said, "Such pacts threaten nobody except potential violators of peace; they injure nobody's interests and serve peace and therefore all humanity."

He also showed there were concepts that went against the idea of collective security, and non-aggression pacts that were contrary to the idea of universal peace. "While the non-aggression pacts concluded by the Soviet Union with its neighbours," he said, "have a special provision invalidating them if an act of aggression is committed by one of the parties against any other state, we know of other pacts which, not at all accidentally, have no such provision. This means that countries which safeguard their rear or flank by such a non-aggression pact are reserving the right to attack some other country with impunity."

At that time, few people saw the underlying meaning of those



words. For their prophetic significance to become clear, humanity had to live through many a blood-stained ordeal.

Soviet diplomacy used every possible opportunity to prevail on the League of Nations to cut short the most trivial of conflicts, wherever they occurred. When war erupted between Bolivia and Paraguay over oil-rich Chaco region in the summer of 1932 (in which the Bolivian army was defeated at the end of 1934), Litvinov reacted vigorously at a plenary meeting of the League of Nations. "The distance that separates us from the war theatre and the relatively small number of troops involved," he said, "must not lessen its importance in our eyes. Our decision may have a far-reaching effect on the arbitration of more serious conflicts. We must remember this. The Soviet delegation insists that the Assembly resolution should be definite and firm and that the Assembly should also be firm in carrying it into effect."

Litvinov's speeches in Geneva and at other international forums won him widespread popularity. He received letters from workers, military men, and intellectuals. They asked him to be careful. The enemy was on the rampage. Vorovsky had been killed. Voikov had been killed. He, too, might be killed. Litvinov replied that, certainly, anything could happen, but not to worry. He had more faith in the power of words, he wrote, than in the power of bullets. The stream of letters from those who had elected him to the Central Executive Committee and, later, to the Supreme Soviet, increased. Some writers asked for his help, others complained to him, an old Bolshevik, of various breaches of the law.

A young couple wrote they had named their son after the Soviet diplomat, Litmir, Lit being an abbreviation of Litvinov, and mir meaning peace. Litvinov wished the infant health and happiness. He knew the young parents meant well, but was firmly opposed to any hero worship.

Despite pressure of time, he often saw young people. The Komso-mols of Moscow's Dzerzhinsky District had asked him, for example, how he learned foreign languages. What he told them could be reduced to one sentence: "I had lots of free time to study foreign languages—I did it in jail."

Young Pioneers of Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, came to Moscow specially to see him. He stood in their midst to pose for the photographer, wrote them a friendly message, and reminded them of what Lenin had said about the need for knowledge.

In 1933, the Party Committee of Moscow's Dzerzhinsky District asked the Foreign Commissariat to assume stewardship over the col-

lective farm in Chudtsevo village, Moscow Region. The Commissariat sent an experienced Party worker, Semyon Mirny, to see the farm. What he saw appalled him. The cows were kept from falling by belts attached to the ceiling of the cowshed. They had not been fed for days and could not stand on their own. The farmers had not been rewarded for their work, and everything was in a state of neglect. Mirny stayed on the collective farm for a few months to re-establish order. Local Party members stood by him. Under his supervision, the spring sowing came off well. And for May Day, on Mirny's advice, the collective farm sent delegates to see their Moscow stewards.

Litvinov was duly informed that the Chudtsevo farmers had come to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. True, he had an appointment with a foreign ambassador, but got in touch with him and asked him to come two hours later.

He received the farmers, questioned them about their farm, and asked if they needed anything. It was clear the farm could not come out of the doldrums without modern vehicles. Litvinov had a few of the Commissariat's lorries transferred to the Chudtsevo farm, and extended other aid.

At the end of the conversation, the farmers said a recent general meeting had decided to rename their farm Litvinov Kolkhoz. They wanted his consent.

Litvinov was dismayed. Here was a problem, possibly the first in his life, that he could not resolve. The two hours were over. The secretary came and said the foreign ambassador had arrived. Litvinov said to tell the visitor he was still busy.

To the collective farmers he said, "Tell your mates they can do what they want. If they insist, they can use my name."

Pleased, the collective farmers filed out of Litvinov's office. As they walked past the foreign diplomat they bowed and said goodbye.

The diplomat asked frigidly, "Was that a diplomatic mission? From what country?"

The secretary replied, "From kolkhoz country."

That night, there was a May Day party at the club of the Foreign Commissariat. The collective farmers, who were guests of honour, sat on the platform next to Litvinov. When giving them passes to the military parade in Red Square, he said, "Go and see your country's money isn't wasted."

In his free time, Litvinov went to the countryhouse in the environs of Moscow. He liked to walk in the fields, or ski in winter, carrying out doctor's orders.

Years ago, he had been seriously ill. Professor Krause, who examined him in Berlin in 1923, said he had tachycardia, and had not long

to live. Litvinov mumbled that if he had survived a Berlin prison in 1907, he would survive anything.

All the same, Litvinov kept to the prescribed diet, carved out time for physiotherapy, and worked up a sweat riding a bicycle. Semyon Budyonny<sup>60</sup> advised him to ride horseback and had a well-behaved horse assigned to him. Litvinov rode every day for two months, then stopped. He could not stomach the procedure at the cavalry grounds: the commander there would cry out, "Attention!" saluted him, and said, "Your horse is ready!"

In May 1935 was the 30th anniversary of the Party's Third Congress. Tatiana Liuvinskaya phoned Litvinov and asked if he remembered he was chief rapporteur.

"There'll be a gathering at the Old Bolsheviks Society tomorrow," she said. "You will speak of the event as a delegate to the Third Congress. Besides, please say something about the state of international affairs—a little more than the papers say."

The following day, punctually at the stated time, Litvinov arrived at the Old Bolsheviks Society.

"Pleased to see all of you," he said excitedly to Franz Lengnik, Yemelyan Yaroslavsky, Pyodor Samoilov, Sophia Smidovich, and other old friends.

Litvinov told them of his meeting Lenin, and of Lenin's book, *The Two Tactics*, in which Lenin said preparations for an armed uprising were the chief priority. Litvinov spoke of the Second International, and said time had not changed its leaders. The sky was overcast, he said, but they were still deceiving the people. Litvinov also spoke of the international scene, saying "a little more than the papers say".

It was Litvinov's custom to keep up Soviet prestige, and to behave with dignity. He detested those who curried favour with foreigners.

On November 8, 1934, George Kennan, then Chief Counsellor of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, asked to be received. The man on duty was Mirny. Kennan said he had come at this unearthly time (November 7 being a Soviet national holiday) because U.S. Ambassador Bullitt was leaving for the United States and wanted to know if Commissar Litvinov had anything to pass on to President Roosevelt.

Mirny, who had been with the Foreign Commissariat for years, knew exactly what he had to do. Though Litvinov happened to be in his office, he said he had no idea where the Commissar was that moment. In Kennan's presence, Mirny went through the motions of calling Litvinov's home and countryhouse. He was naturally told that Litvinov was out, which fact he regretfully conveyed to the U.S. diplomat. Kennan said he would call again at noon.

"I said you weren't in," Mirny reported to Litvinov.

"Fine."

"What am I to say when he calls at noon?"

"Tell him it's our national holiday, and that I'm out. If Bullitt wants me, he can put off his departure."

This reply to Bullitt's messenger may have been prompted by the fact that people in Moscow were falling over themselves to court Bullitt.

Stormclouds were gathering again on the political horizon. On March 16, 1935, Germany denounced the military restrictions of the Versailles Treaty.

Neither Lenin nor any other Soviet statesman had ever considered the Versailles Treaty fair. They thought it unfair, and said so time and again. But when it was breached by Nazi Germany in order to arm itself, the Soviet Union reacted vigorously. Soviet diplomacy had warned the West many times of Germany's behaviour. The warnings were received in silence or spurned as an exaggeration of Hitler's role and ability.

Litvinov said on this score: "I speak on behalf of a country that had nothing to do with the Versailles Treaty and never concealed its negative attitude towards that treaty as a whole. But what are we to do if a country that demands the right to arm itself is led by men who publicly declare their aims not only of revenge but also of unrestricted territorial conquest and destruction of the independence of country after country." He said those men, far from disguising or renouncing their aims, were brainwashing the nation in a warlike spirit: "What are we to do when a country with that kind of leaders and with that kind of programme refuses to guarantee ... the security of its near and far neighbours. After all, such guarantees are given freely by countries that are beyond suspicion. How can we be blind to these facts?"

Litvinov's speeches elicited response far and wide. They called attention to Hitler's policy, and rallied public opinion to combat fascism. Years later, Litvinov's peace efforts in the League were described in a postwar publication, *The Falsifiers of History*:

"Everybody knows of the persevering struggle of the Soviet Union and its delegation in the League of Nations under Maxim Litvinov to safeguard and strengthen collective security. Throughout the prewar period, the Soviet delegation in the League fought for the principle of collective security, raising its voice in defence of that principle at every session of the League and in nearly all the League commissions."



On March 28, Anthony Eden arrived in Moscow on the invitation of the Soviet government. Britain was then occupied appeasing Hitler Germany, while keeping up appearances as a fighter for peace. Litvinov stressed the menace of Nazi Germany not only to the Soviet Union but also the West. He called Eden's attention to the fact that, while elaborating on his *Drang nach Osten* programme, the Nazi Führer was also nourishing plans against the Western democracies. "By speaking of eastward expansion," Litvinov said, "Hitler is tricking the Western countries into permitting him to arm. After he arms himself, the guns may begin shooting in an entirely different direction."

Four years later, the wisdom and foresight of the Soviet diplomat were borne out: bombs rained on London and other British cities.

The Foreign Commissar gave a dinner in Eden's honour at his countryhouse near Moscow. By then, everybody knew Litvinov's phrase, "Peace is indivisible". Diplomats used it, lecturers used it. The *chef* at Litvinov's countryhouse used it too: the butter served for dinner was inscribed, "Peace is indivisible". The cook had earlier inquired how the phrase was written in English. At table, Eden observed in jest that the butter was untouchable, touching it would breach the principle of indivisibility.

Eden's visit yielded no results. No agreement was reached on Anglo-Soviet cooperation.

The visits of other statesmen showed conclusively that no international issue could be resolved without the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's drive for peace, its efforts at international conferences and in the League of Nations, won it mounting sympathy and gratitude in all countries. In June 1934, Romania established diplomatic relations with it. Progressives in France demanded closer relations, and contacts between the USSR and France increased. A French scientific mission under Jean Baptiste Perrin came to the USSR in May 1934, followed by a visit to Moscow of French Air Minister Pierre Cot. A delegation of Soviet airmen visited France. So did a group of Soviet writers, the Red Army's Song and Dance Ensemble, and other entertainers. Summing up, French historian Maxime Mourin noted in his book, *Les relations franco-soviétiques 1917-1967*, that "all this, along with the Barthou-Litvinov negotiations, contributed to the further public approval in France of a rapprochement between Paris and Moscow".

Under public pressure, the French government decided to sign a Franco-Soviet mutual assistance pact. It was concluded on May 2, 1935, in Paris. Its Article 1 read: "It is equally understood that if the USSR or France should be subject to the threat or danger of attack by any other European state, France and the Soviet Union shall

open mutual consultations at once in order to act in furtherance of Article 10 of the League of Nations Covenant."

French Foreign Minister Pierre Laval came to Moscow soon after the Treaty was concluded. In the three days of his stay, he was received by top Soviet leaders. This showed the importance Moscow attached to Soviet-French relations. Soon, however, Laval's true attitude came to light. Here is what *History of Diplomacy*, put out some years ago in the Soviet Union, says on this score:

"Upon leaving Moscow, Laval stopped over in Poland. Here he explained to Polish Foreign Minister Jozef Beck that the Franco-Soviet pact was not really aimed at securing Soviet aid or helping the Soviet Union against any possible aggression, but rather at preventing a rapprochement between Germany and the Soviet Union."

For Laval, in fact, the treaty was a tool for a future deal with Hitler Germany. He told his friend Krumbach in confidence that he had signed the Franco-Russian pact to have an extra bargaining chip in negotiating with Berlin.

After the war, as we know, Laval was executed for collaborating with Hitler. But the treaty he had signed helped the anti-fascist forces in Europe, notably France, immensely. Also, it helped consolidate the Popular Front. A huge meeting at Buffalo Stade in Paris on July 14, 1935, precipitated anti-fascist actions all over the country on an unprecedented scale. The French Communist Party's slogan, "Conduct a policy of peace in close alliance with the USSR", became a national slogan. The gathering at Buffalo Stade took an oath: "We solemnly promise unity in order to safeguard democracy, secure disarmament, dissolve rebel societies, and protect our freedom against fascism."

Under the influence of the Soviet policy of peace and the Franco-Soviet Treaty, the Popular Front adopted a programme which envisaged "international cooperation in the League of Nations framework to ensure collective security by defining the aggressor and automatically applying joint sanctions in the event of an aggression". The 7th paragraph of the programme called for the "introduction, especially in Eastern and Central Europe, of a system of pacts open to all concerned on the lines of the Franco-Soviet Treaty".

The French and Soviet press reminded readers of the two great nations' traditional friendship. Litvinov wrote a series of editorials in the *Journal de Moscou* on friendship with France, but added that the past should not be forgotten. (He was evidently referring to the fact that France had recognised the Soviet Union later than other European powers.) He knew Laval and his followers would try to hit back.

Three weeks after Laval's visit, Moscow received Eduard Beneš. On May 16, in Prague, prior to the visit, the two countries had signed

a mutual assistance treaty. Beneš visited Leningrad and Kiev, and also called at a collective farm in the Ukraine.

By the end of 1935, the results of the Soviet peace effort, essential if the country wanted to continue the construction of socialism, were becoming visible.

The mutual assistance pacts with France and Czechoslovakia, the treaties defining aggression, and other treaties, conventions, and protocols signed with certain European and Asian countries in 1933—all this was a serious obstacle to Hitler Germany's aggressive designs. The establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States laid the ground for an alliance against Hitler Germany in the event of a Nazi aggression, and helped strengthen the Soviet Union's position in the Far East.

But the Western powers did not renounce their secret plan of channelling the German threat eastward, against the Soviet Union. Hatred for the socialist land befogged the minds of many statesmen. They continued to undermine collective security in Europe, and encouraged the aggressive behaviour of the fascist states.

World opinion was outraged by Italy's continuing aggression in Africa. The Soviet Union demanded that the 16th Article of the League's Covenant should be applied to Italy. The proposal was adopted. But those who protected Mussolini remained true to themselves: the key strategic item, oil, was not listed among the goods that could not be shipped to Italy. Britain refused to close the Suez Canal, which was then under its total control, and Italy continued to ship troops and arms via Suez to Ethiopia. Some time later, Britain and France secured repeal of the League's sanctions against fascist Italy.

Litvinov addressed the League of Nations several times, setting forth Soviet proposals for collective security. One proposal was that any country which committed aggression against a member of the League of Nations should be considered at war with all the other members of the League. A commission was formed to examine the Soviet proposals. It worked for two years. Deliberate British and French sabotage prevented their adoption.

Litvinov's speech in the League of Nations on May 1, 1936, was described by the world press as most impressive. He said the League's reaction to the aggression against Ethiopia was one of the saddest chapters in its history. "We do not need a League safe for aggressors," Litvinov said. "Because they are bound to turn it from an instrument of peace into its opposite."

In 1936, the epicentre of the approaching storm shifted more and more in the direction of Hitler Germany. On March 7, Hitler sent his

troops into the demilitarised Rhineland. This tore up the Versailles Treaty and, indeed, the Locarno agreements.

Now, even blind men could see what Germany was out to accomplish. Yet European diplomacy continued to encourage the Nazis. The British started negotiations. They suggested convening the League Council in London, and inviting Nazi diplomats to it. As a result, the adopted resolution confined itself to admitting the Nazi violations of the Versailles and Locarno accords. The Western powers had refused to qualify Germany's behaviour as a menace to peace. Though at that time Hitler could still have been made to retreat. As the world discovered later, commanders of the Wehrmacht divisions that had entered the Rhineland, had Hitler's secret orders to withdraw at once if the French took armed action.

Yet capitalist Europe shrank back, as though mesmerised by a python. It looked at the aggressor with apathy and a sense of defeat. The Soviet Union alone was still trying to stop Hitler. But in Geneva, as before, the distinguished delegates had their morning walks, and drank appetitifs and exchanged compliments in the lounges of luxury hotels.

In 1936, steps were taken to buttress the Soviet Union's position in the crucial Black Sea region. At that time, relations between the Soviet Union and Turkey were good. Kemal Atatürk, founder of the Turkish Republic, appreciated the selfless Soviet aid to his country during its armed struggle against the imperialist intervention, and also later, after it had won independence. In the early 1930s, the Soviet Union granted Turkey interest-free credits and technical assistance in building textile mills. It helped Turkey to establish new industries. The Turkish people responded with affection and gratitude. While Litvinov went to Washington, another Soviet delegation, headed by Kliment Voroshilov,<sup>61</sup> set out for Turkey. He was elected honorary citizen of Izmir.

The Soviet Union's friendship with Turkey annoyed its enemies. Britain was plotting to drive a wedge between the Soviets and Turks. Nazi diplomats, too, stepped up their activity. A pro-Western tendency was gradually taking shape in the Turkish government.

That was the state of affairs when an international conference opened on the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus in the Swiss town of Montreux on June 22, 1936. Soviet diplomacy was out to back Turkey in recovering full sovereignty in the zone of the two straits, to ensure the interests of the Soviet Union and the other Black Sea countries, and to have a ceiling established for naval vessels of non-littoral powers admitted to the Black Sea in peacetime.



As usual, Litvinov took along a very small delegation: the General Secretary of the Foreign Commissariat, one expert on general affairs, Anatoly Miller, a man who knew Turkey, and three military experts. Neither an interpreter nor a secretary. To his mind, aside from the pertinent subject, a Foreign Commissariat official should know foreign languages fluently. But he did take along a stenographer and an office clerk.

Aside from the Soviet Union and Turkey, the conference was attended by Britain, France, Japan, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Greece, and even Australia, the latter having been invited by the British. Britain sent its best diplomats, including Sir Alexander Cadogan. But the heart and soul, and actual leader of the delegation, was Harry Enes Randall, who was in charge of Eastern affairs in the Foreign Office. Later, during the Second World War, he headed Britain's secret service in the Balkans.

Tewfik Rushdi Aras, the leader of the Turkish delegation, was a most colourful figure, a flexible diplomat, and past master at the tricks of Oriental diplomacy, who was bent on disguising the impending rapprochement between Turkey and Britain, and kept saying he wanted "to gratify all delegations". Whom the Turks gratified most of all, of course, were the British. On the assumption that a solution most beneficial to Turkey depended on Britain's grace. Aras even held secret talks with the British, who were out to wreck the Soviet plan.

When the delegates were discussing the passage of Soviet major-  
tonnage warships through the straits, Aras suggested adding the words "of the existing fleet".

"How am I to understand your proposal?" Litvinov asked. "Does it mean that if we build new ships you're not going to let them through?"

The Turk replied:

"What I mean is that the word 'existing' should not be understood as 'present-day'."

"Am I to understand—that you're taking back the word 'existing'?"

Uncertainly, Aras said "I am."

Randall was instantly on his feet. He turned to the Turkish Foreign Minister angrily:

"What do you mean? Haven't we agreed with you those words would be in the convention?"

The Turk was confused. He made a feeble attempt at explaining. Nothing came of it. In the end, he apologised to Litvinov and to Randall, and asked the chairman to expunge the discussion from the minutes.

The conference in Montreux dragged out. Litvinov went to Geneva, while a working committee stayed on. When he returned in mid-July, it was clear the British diplomats were bent on wrecking the conference.

At this critical point he told TASS correspondent Andrew Rothstein to go tell the other journalists he was packing his bags: he was leaving Montreux and not coming back.

A report on Litvinov's intentions appeared the following day in all the papers. The conference, they said, was about to break down.

Litvinov had chosen a fortunate moment for his trial balloon. Ominous news continued to come from Germany. Von Papen had signed an agreement in Vienna, paving the way for an *Anschluss*. The situation in Europe was growing tenser. And at Montreux Britain was forced to relent. The Turkish delegation, too, which had received appropriate instructions from Ankara, became more pliable. The main Soviet proposals were accepted, and on July 20, 1936, the conference culminated in the signing of the Montreux Convention.

The world press spoke of one more Soviet diplomatic coup. Even the whiteguard Paris paper, *Posledniye Novosti*, commented that the history of Russian diplomacy had not known a more brilliant success.

On July 17, 1936, Litvinov was sixty. He hated birthday celebrations. But his mates were determined. The *chef* at Hotel Montreux Palace, where the Soviet diplomats stayed, was secretly asked to make lentil soup, Litvinov's favourite. The hotel owner remonstrated. "The Monsieur Minister is sixty," he kept saying, "and only lentil soup for dinner? Impossible!"

All members of the Soviet delegation came to the dinner. They congratulated Litvinov. He thanked them curtly. That was the end of it. Congratulations arrived from Moscow. The Council of People's Commissars and the Party's Central Committee paid homage to him, "elder statesman of the Bolshevik Party and leader of the Soviet diplomatic service, tireless fighter against war and for peace in the interests of the working people".

For his outstanding services in behalf of peace, he was decorated with the Order of Lenin. Other letters and telegrams arrived. Litvinov was congratulated by colleagues, military men, workers, writers, collective farmers, and Young Pioneers. The Foreign Commissariat cabled that the messages were so numerous they could not all be forwarded to Montreux.

Litvinov wrote in reply:

"Dear friends and comrades, I am deeply touched. Most of you know I do not like celebrations. Reports of jubilees in the papers are

like draft obituaries... Certainly, looking back at 60 one feels that what is left of life is much shorter than what went before. But if Oscar Wilde was right when he said a man is as old as he feels, your congratulations on my 60th birthday are premature. Besides, the enthusiasm we feel building socialism makes us feel younger and drives away all thoughts of old age...

"This is especially clear to those who, like me, have for 35 years, almost all their conscious lives, been Bolsheviks and cannot think in terms other than those of a Marxist and Bolshevik. As we come closer to our ideals, our age becomes more meaningful and gratifying, for we measure it not by any number of years but by their quality. For this substantial reason I beg you to deduct half my age, and forget that I am sixty. All I can add is that I wish you to come to your 60th birthday with the same sense of youthfulness and the same faith in our splendid future as I do today."

Dell came in the evening, and talked him into going to Villeneuve, where a few other friendly journalists had gathered to honour him. Light wine was ordered. Dell wanted to make a speech, but Litvinov objected, jested merrily, and spoke of Moscow and the enchanting Russian landscape...

On the following day, word came of the mutiny in Spain against the Republican government.

Litvinov's visage clouded over. He said reflectively, "Hard times are ahead..."

## Chapter 10

### HARD TIMES

In the summer of 1936, Spain won the hearts of Soviet people forever. Solidarity meetings were held. Volunteers wanted to help the Spanish, to stand by José Diaz and Dolores Ibárruri. In the backwoods of Russia men and women learned the words, "No pasarán". They followed the route of the s.s *Komsomolets* carrying medical supplies to Spain. The Manzanares River became as familiar as the Neva and Volga. When an Italian corps was routed at Guadalajara, people all over the Soviet Union rejoiced. Homegrown strategists appeared in every house. They predicted the course of events.

Then black-eyed little boys and girls came to Moscow, Ivanovo, and other cities from Madrid, Valencia, Alicante, and other Spanish towns. Thousands of families were eager to take them in. The Spanish children were provided the best living conditions and schooling. The Soviet Land became their second homeland. And when they came to solidarity meetings, raising their tightly clenched little fists in salute, all arms rose in response.

The fascist mutiny and the subsequent Italo-German intervention was out to wipe out democracy in Spain. But it was also out to cut off Britain and France from their colonial possessions, and create a staging ground in the backyard of France. More, for Hitler and Mussolini Spain was a proving-ground for the arms they would use in the coming world war.

The aggression could have been nipped in the bud. Italy's resources were badly depleted by its war in Ethiopia. It was gripped by serious economic difficulties. There was mounting disaffection in the country over Mussolini's African adventure. And Germany was not yet strong enough to oppose a united front of democratic countries. At the end of 1936, the Wehrmacht had 14 army corps numbering a million men. It was not ready for a big war. Resolute action by Britain and France, both of them with powerful navies in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, could have speedily paralysed the Italo-German intervention.

The Soviet position was clear: the USSR called for resolute action



against any and all aggressors, and was prepared to impose sanctions against the fascist powers.

But the European tragedy did not begin in the early hours of July 18, 1936. It began much earlier, and originated with the anti-Sovietism of the European powers, which were determined to at least weaken, if not destroy, the Soviet Union. It had to be turned into a second-rate power at any price, and German ambitions would serve this aim.

The success of the democratic forces in France and Spain, where the Popular Front deposed the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, galvanised reactionaries all over the world, and redoubled anti-Soviet sentiment in Britain, France, and the United States. A month before the fascist mutiny broke out in Spain, the British *Daily Mail* wrote that if communism in Spain and France should spread to other countries, the German and Italian governments, which had stamped out the contagion in their own countries, would be Britain's most useful friends.

The three years between the start of the fascist mutiny in Spain and the outbreak of the Second World War were highlighted by vigorous Soviet efforts to safeguard peace and counter the designs of aggressors in various parts of the world. Litvinov was most active in this drive, and not only as diplomat but as propagator of the Marxist-Leninist ideology.

On November 27, 1936, Spain's Republican government protested against the Italo-German intervention in the League of Nations Assembly. The Soviet Union backed up the Spanish delegate. At an extraordinary session of the League Council in December 1936, Litvinov called for urgent measures to halt the fascist intervention.

All Soviet efforts were resisted by the British and French. The question of the Italo-German intervention was taken out of the competence of the League of Nations and transferred to a specially formed non-interference committee.

The Soviet Union joined the non-interference committee in the hope of influencing the policy of the Western powers, and preventing any growth of aggression. But Britain and France went out of their way to turn the committee into a body that prevented aid from reaching the lawful Spanish government.

Alexandra Kollontai, who was then member of the Soviet delegation to the League of Nations, wrote her close friend and secretary, Emma Lorensen, in Stockholm that a "fatalist" view of world affairs prevailed in Geneva. "My heart bleeds," she wrote, "when I see the way they treat Spain. It's horrifying. I'm unhappy and furious..."

Most of the time, Litvinov was in Geneva for that was the venue of the battle royal against the chief enemy, Hitler. Hitler had inspired

the war in Spain, that prelude of a world conflagration, and this had to be brought home to all nations.

The basic guidelines of Soviet foreign policy were well defined. And Litvinov followed those guidelines faithfully. The diplomatic service was promoting them, and he, Litvinov, was accentuating them in his Geneva speeches.

Before the League sittings he usually walked a bit along the shore of the Lake of Geneva. Here he could concentrate, and prepare for the next public speech. Sometimes, he would go to a nearby township. The keeper of the little local restaurant knew him well. He usually ordered beer and some spicy dish, read the papers, and ruminated. Quiet all round—just hills and the valley—a tranquil joy of life everywhere, but the calm was deceptive: Europe and the rest of the world was drifting irrevocably towards another big war.

The British and French delegates continued their dangerous game. They went out of their way to prove that Litvinov was exaggerating, that Nazi Germany wasn't half as great a menace as he made out.

Don't fear the Reich, he was told. Hitler was nothing but a loud-mouthed rabble-rouser. Barking dogs don't bite.

And he parried: I know barking dogs don't bite, but do the dogs know it?

The Soviet Union aided the people of Spain to the best of its ability. It granted credits to buy arms—to the tune of 85 million dollars. Soviet volunteers fought for Republican Spain. Soviet military advisers helped build up the regular Spanish People's Army. Shiploads of medical supplies and food arrived.

Italy and Germany attacked merchant ships in the open sea. A few British and French vessels were sunk along with their crews. The Soviet ships *Timiriazev* and *Blagoyev* were sunk, too.

Britain and France called a conference of Mediterranean and Black Sea countries to discuss safety of shipping. It was held in Nyon from September 10 to 14, 1937. Litvinov attended, and, as usual, worked for concrete decisions.

Cabling the Foreign Commissariat about the opening of the conference, Litvinov reported: "They tried to prevail on me not to speak. The motive: to get on with business and begin patrolling the Mediterranean. I said I welcomed prompt action, but if the patrolling started half an hour later, no one would lose. Since we were not consulted before the conference convened, I said, we could not sit idly without stating our government's attitude.

"I criticised destroying submarines only if they violated the London Convention, which envisaged wartime rather than a time of peace. I described that as 'humanising war in peacetime' because the

underlying sense was that submarine crews would be allowed to save their skins. I also said this paved the way to legalising war and recognising Franco's rights as a belligerent. My objections confused and embarrassed the British. They admitted I had raised a fundamental point."

On September 11, Litvinov followed up with this telegram: "Many of my objections have been taken into account in the text, notably non-recognition of any rights of belligerents."

The conference made it obligatory for its participants to take firm action against any acts of piracy in the Mediterranean.

The fascist aggression in Spain strained the situation in Europe to the extreme. The atmosphere in Asia, too, was near boiling point. On November 25, 1936, Germany, Italy, and Japan signed an accord in Berlin—a monstrosity called the Anti-Comintern Pact. Shortly before, Göring said at a cabinet meeting in Berlin that a collision with Russia was unavoidable. In the summer of 1937, Japan renewed its war in China. The Italo-German interference in Spanish affairs intensified. The interventionists shed all pretences: they were openly sending troops and arms to help Franco.

Litvinov travelled extensively—seeing diplomats, attending conferences, coming to League of Nations sessions. He would appear in Moscow for a few days, then go to Warsaw or Paris or Geneva. Maisky in London was active through diplomatic channels, but also as a goodwill envoy—seeing public leaders, writers, artists, actors. The public in Britain began demanding their government should take more vigorous action against Hitler Germany. In France, Soviet diplomats helped by eminent scientists and public leaders organised pressure on Léon Blum's government and, in effect, prevailed on him to declare that France would react to any German aggression.

In November 1937, the League of Nations called a conference in Brussels to discuss the Japanese incursions in China. The Western powers were playing their dangerous game in that part of the world as well: the USA, Britain, and other capitalist countries gave to understand they would do nothing to curb the aggressor in Asia. In its declaration of November 24, the conference meekly called on China and Japan "to stop the hostilities and resort to peaceful methods".

Though the situation in the Far East was complicated to the extreme, Litvinov was convinced that the chief enemy was in Europe. In December 1937, he granted an interview on the Far Eastern question. Extracts appeared in the foreign press. Litvinov said the Anti-Comintern Pact was a threat not only to the Soviet Union, but also, and notably, to France and Britain. Ideology meant very little to the Nazis, he said. Hitler had militarised the Reich and adopted methods

of the crudest gangsterism. Mussolini and the Japanese were following suit because they hoped to get their share of the pie. And the first victims would be the rich capitalist states. The peoples of Britain and France were inactive, while their leaders were blind to obvious facts. Hitler Germany would start by overrunning France and attacking Britain, which it would then proceed to plunder. The Soviet Union would be the last country to be attacked. "We have our Red Army," he said, "and vast expanses of territory."

Meanwhile, Japan was complicating its relations with the United States. A conflict between them loomed big. Litvinov warned the U.S. Ambassador, Joseph Davies, about it. Davies took the warning lightly. He had other worries. His wife, a rich heiress, had crossed the Atlantic to Odessa in a luxury yacht. She loved publicity, and enjoyed the press coverage of her voyage. Western journalists wrote more about her yacht and its crew of forty than about European security and the Far East. Litvinov observed that despite the highly complex world situation, the U.S. press was occupied with trifles. Davies assured the Soviet diplomat things were not as bad as he thought and advised him to take a less sombre view.

Every time he returned from abroad, Litvinov would scrutinise developments at home. He was eager to see the country's daily concerns. Once, back from Geneva, Litvinov attended a reception at the Moscow Soviet. He listened to the speakers with rapt attention, asked people about their age, occupation, and record, and looked closely at the young people around him who would soon replace the elder Bolsheviks at the helm of state. He had boundless faith in the creative powers of the people.

But there was something that bothered him. He saw processes foreign to the spirit of Leninism. He saw fear, uncertainty, and suspicion beginning to seize hold. This was increasingly visible, and tended to slacken progress and interfere with people's lives. It hindered people from devoting all their faculties to the building of a new society—the aim of the Revolution.

One day, Litvinov was about to go to a reception at some foreign embassy. He asked Krestinsky who else would go from the Foreign Commissariat.

"Many have been invited, but few will go," Krestinsky said.

"Why?"

"They're afraid."

Litvinov had to use his powers of persuasion before his people agreed to go to diplomatic receptions.

It looked as though nothing could shake Litvinov's position as



chief of the Soviet diplomatic service. His creditable performance on the international scene was acknowledged in every possible way. In 1936, at the Eighth Extraordinary Congress of Soviets, he was elected to the presiding party and was made member of the committee drafting the final text of the Constitution. *Pravda* published his speech on the front page. On December 6, 1936, the paper carried a photograph of Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov, Budyonny, and Litvinov voting for the final text of the Constitution.

Litvinov saw his relationship with Stalin as one between two Communists with common ideas. He could not conceive any worship of rank within the Communist Party, whose very name stood for equality and fraternity. While acknowledging Stalin's position as the Party's General Secretary, he never curried favour. This was noticed by everyone who saw him with Stalin.

In 1936, at the Foreign Commissariat's villa, a reception was being held in connection with U.S. Ambassador Bullitt's departure. Stalin happened to phone at that very time. Yuri Kozlovsky, Litvinov's secretary, took the call.

"Where's Comrade Litvinov?" Stalin asked.

"He's giving a farewell luncheon in Bullitt's honour."

"Can you reach him?"

"I'll do my best."

"We've arranged to meet. Tell him I expect him at four sharp."

When told of Stalin's call, Litvinov said he would make it by four—if the reception ended in time.

Vladimir Barkov, who was chief of protocol at the Foreign Commissariat, said Litvinov had always behaved with dignity.

"Dignity came natural to him," he said. "Flattery and bootlicking were entirely foreign. Nor could he bear these traits in others. He never departed from Party standards of behaviour. This was true when Leninist standards still prevailed, and also true later. I recall that once, in 1935, when he and I were striding across the Kremlin to the government building, we saw Stalin walking towards us. Litvinov showed no sign of excitement or fuss, his stride did not change. Stalin came up. They said hello. Litvinov introduced me, 'This is Barkov, recently appointed chief of protocol.'"

"Stalin, who had a good memory, said hello and observed, 'Ah, I know. We recalled you from China in a hurry.'"

"This was true. I had been urgently recalled during the troubles on the Chinese Eastern Railway."

"Stalin and Litvinov exchanged a few more observations, and we went on our way."

Things were growing worse. Uncertainty and suspiciousness spread

more and more in the Foreign Commissariat. One staff member after another disappeared. They were locked up on charges of anti-Soviet activity.

Nearly all Litvinov's deputies were arrested in 1937 and 1938. First Deputy Krestinsky was involved in the Trotsky trials, and was shot. The same befell Karakhan. Boris Stomoniakov, too, one of Litvinov's closest associates, was arrested.

On the day this happened, Litvinov had just returned from abroad. He learned that Stomoniakov had tried to commit suicide, and had been hospitalised. Litvinov telephoned Stalin, and made an appointment.

Here is their short, dramatic dialogue:

"Comrade Stalin, I can vouch for Stomoniakov. I have known him since the beginning of the century. We carried out some tough assignments together for Lenin and the Central Committee. I can vouch for him."

Stalin was lighting his pipe, walking slowly up and down his study. He stopped beside Litvinov, looked at him frigidly, and said:

"Comrade Litvinov, you can vouch for one person only— yourself."

Litvinov left. We can only guess what he, a man who had joined Lenin's party the year it was founded, must have felt.

As everywhere else in the country, meetings were held in the Foreign Commissariat to denounce "enemies of the people". Litvinov attended none of them. Never a word did he utter about or against "enemies of the people". In 1937, at a Party meeting, Vladimir Potemkin, the newly appointed First Deputy Foreign Commissar, wanted Litvinov to say what he thought of the Krestinsky trial, for hadn't Krestinsky been his first deputy. Litvinov replied:

"Read the papers. They have the whole story. Or do you want me to say more than the papers say? Does that mean you don't believe the papers?"

Never did Potemkin raise the issue again.

In those days, Litvinov avoided recalling ambassadors or any other diplomats serving abroad. He did so in extreme cases only. For he knew they might not be able to leave Moscow ever again. Alexander Bekzadyan, Ambassador to Hungary, came to Moscow once without Litvinov's summons. Litvinov told him to go back to Budapest at once. But too late. Bekzadyan was apprehended.

Early in 1937, Litvinov came to Paris to see Potemkin, who was then Soviet Ambassador to France, to discuss a few urgent aspects of Anglo-French policy vis-à-vis Spain. A few other ambassadors had been summoned there, too.

Litvinov's train arrived from Geneva early in the morning. He had asked Potemkin in advance that no one should come to meet him at the station. Paris was still asleep. Litvinov dismissed his bodyguard, whom he called a guardian angel. He wanted to be alone with a diplomat whom he had known since Civil War days. They walked slowly along the deserted streets. Litvinov maintained a morose silence. Suddenly, he spoke:

"I can't bear it any longer—those arrests, and those pacans to Stalin. What's happening? Lenin's closest comrades are being done away with..."

The outburst ended just as suddenly as it began. His livid face gradually paled.

Potemkin was waiting for Litvinov at the embassy gate. He looked at him closely, wondering why he had walked all the way from the station.

In the meantime, the European tragedy was developing swiftly. The policy of appeasing Hitler bore new, venomous fruit. On March 12, 1938, Nazi troops invaded Austria. The *Anschluss* occurred. Austria ceased to exist as an independent state. It became a German *Land* with Seyss-Inquart, an Austrian Nazi and Hitler's emissary, in charge. Vexedly, in a letter of instruction, Litvinov wrote to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington: "Roosevelt and Hull preach peace, but have not lifted a finger in its behalf."

Capitalist Europe swallowed the new act of piracy without a murmur. The Soviet Union alone came out against Germany's aggressive policy. On March 17 it declared that the Austrian nation had been forcibly stripped of political, economic, and cultural independence. Litvinov said, "The disappearance of the Austrian state was not even noticed by the League of Nations."

In April, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain signed an agreement with Mussolini, establishing "good-neighbour relations" between Britain and Italy. Britain recognised Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, and virtually legalised Italian interference in Spain. France struck, too, closing the Franco-Spanish border.

The non-interference committee had practically ceased to function. But that altered nothing. On April 19, 1939, Alvarez del Vayo declared that now the policy of non-interference betrayed a desire to strangle the people fighting for their independence, for peace, and the future of European freedom and democracy.

Preparations for the 18th Congress of the Communist Party were begun at the end of 1937. Litvinov saw Stalin more often than usual,

for the latter was writing his congress report, part of which dealt with the international situation. Though he had no use for ghost writers, he did call in advisers, mostly Dmitry Manuilsky, the Party's representative in the Comintern, and Yevgeny Varga, an eminent student of world affairs. This time, however, his choice fell on Litvinov, whom he would ask for his opinion, and for references and papers.

In the early months of 1938, the Leningrad regional and city Party conference elected Litvinov its delegate to the congress, which opened on March 10, 1939, in Moscow. Practically all the delegates whom Litvinov had seen at the previous, 17th, Congress, were conspicuous by their absence. Nearly all the regional and republican committees were headed by new people, so were nearly all the commissariats.

The Central Committee's report contained an analysis of the international and domestic situation in the five years since the previous congress. Staggering changes had occurred on the international scene. There was political and economic upheaval in the capitalist countries. The peak of the economic crisis had been passed, but its aftermaths were still felt. The fight for the redivision of colonies had grown sharper. The system of postwar treaties had collapsed. War had broken out in various parts of the world. The imperialist states would not abandon the idea of somehow wiping out the USSR, the world's only socialist country.

For the Soviet Union those five years had been a time of further economic and cultural growth, growth of political and military power, of persevering struggle for peace. And this despite all the difficulties.

A new Central Committee was elected at the Party congress. Litvinov was one of the few Central Committee members elected at the 17th Congress to be re-elected.

By the summer of 1938 it was quite clear that the League of Nations would do nothing to bridle aggression. But Soviet diplomacy missed no opportunity to promote peace. The 101st session of the League Council opened on May 10 in Geneva. Litvinov came a few days before the opening, and at once received Romanian Foreign Minister N.P. Comnène. Then he met British Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax. London, he learned, intended to continue ignoring the Italo-German intervention in Spain. Halifax declared that appeasement was popular in all countries.

The League Council session showed that the lesser states, prompted by the British, intended to evade their commitments, and to impose no sanctions against aggressors. The Swiss spokesman said as much



in a special statement. And Switzerland inspired similar statements by other countries.

Alvarez del Vayo said France and Britain had decided "to let Germany and Italy operate freely on the side of the Spanish mutineers".

Litvinov took the floor after the Spanish delegate. "All countries present and not present," he said, "know the point of view of the Soviet Government. They know that if it had depended on the Soviet Government, the League of Nations would long since have carried out its commitments to a fellow-member of the League. The Soviet Government would never stand in the League Council's way if it decided to carry out the demands of the Spanish representative."

Would the League of Nations act? No. For that matter, it was nearly dead. Alexandra Kollontai, who was in Geneva with Litvinov, wrote to a friend in Stockholm:

"The international situation is exceedingly tense. And if there's a solution, it will not come from Geneva."

Soviet diplomacy continued to fight. It did its utmost to support Republican Spain. Litvinov advised Alvarez del Vayo to demand that the League of Nations should condemn the Italo-German intervention and apply collective sanctions under Article 16 of the League's Covenant. The battle to have this issue put up for discussion went on for three days. French journalist André Simon wrote:

"It was a tragic spectacle. At long last, the resolution submitted to the Council by Senor del Vayo was put to the vote. The 'No' pronounced amid deadly silence by Lord Halifax and Georges Bonnet sounded like a slap in the face. The tension in the hall became unbearable. The only one to back Republican Spain was the Soviet representative. At my side, I heard the lady correspondent of a Swiss newspaper burst into tears. Senor del Vayo and his companions were deadly pale, but held their heads high as they left the assembly hall. At the entrance to his hotel, journalists surrounded the French Foreign Minister. People shouted: 'You've killed Spain!' Pale in the face, Bonnet took to his heels."

The policy of the Western powers left the road open for new aggressions. In May, after a succession of provocative actions, German troops began concentrating on the Czechoslovak border. The intentions of the Nazis were obvious: to dismember Czechoslovakia, and seize the Sudetenland.

The Soviet Union followed Hitler's moves with the closest attention. On March 16, 1938, Litvinov warned in a press interview that if Czechoslovakia were attacked, the Soviet Union would fulfil its duty. On April 25, this was reiterated by Mikhail Kalinin.

In the early half of 1938, the country was preparing for elections to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. Litvinov was nominated to run for Deputy in Leningrad's Petrograd election district, where he had also run in the elections to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. He came to Leningrad to appear before the electorate, and used that public appearance to comment on some burning international issues.

The public appearance, attended by more than 2,000 people, took place on June 23. Falin, an engineer of the Electric Factory, welcomed Litvinov on behalf of the electorate. He said, among other things, that Litvinov had dedicated his life to the working people, their liberation, and happiness. "As People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, he said, Litvinov had "acquitted himself as a fearless fighter against fascism."

Speakers succeeded each other on the platform. One of them turned to Litvinov and said, "You have elevated the image of a Soviet diplomat. It is a proud calling, recognised all over the world. Your fight for world peace merits the highest praise."

*Leningradskaya Pravda* commented: "When the ovations died down, Comrade Litvinov delivered a long and profound speech, producing a brilliant analysis of the international situation."

Litvinov showed how the international situation had developed after the World War. He recalled that at first the British and French had refused to recognize the Soviet Union. He called attention to the fascist threat. "Our pacts with France and Czechoslovakia," he said, "commit us to aid each other in the event of war. But what we really want is to prevent or at least lessen the danger of a war breaking out in specific parts of Europe. In face of the menace to Czechoslovakia today, it should be clear to all concerned that the Soviet-Czechoslovak pact will work in that direction. That is the biggest, if not the sole, major factor that relieves the tension around Czechoslovakia... Czechoslovakia is the defending side, and the responsibility for the consequences are to be borne by the offending side."

The audience applauded heartily. Cries of "Death to fascism" resounded. Litvinov continued: "Only a pallid shadow has remained of the impressive force that the League of Nations should in fact constitute... The League of Nations is paralysed, and if no urgent measures are taken to revive it, it will fall apart completely by the time the next conflict breaks out."

All speeches addressed to his fellow-countrymen, Litvinov ended with the appeal of strengthening the nation's defence capacity. He did so in Leningrad, too. "If the worst happens," he said, "and the peace is breached despite our efforts to the contrary, we know that

our defences are in strong and skillful hands, those of the Red Army, Red Navy, and Red Air Force, backed by the entire Soviet people."

The Soviet government sought to avert a Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia. Litvinov devoted all his energy to this. On August 22, 1938, he received the German Ambassador Werner von der Schulenburg. The Soviet Foreign Commissar said, "The people of Czechoslovakia will fight for their independence as one man... We, too, will live up to our commitments to Czechoslovakia."

In his record of their conversation, Schulenburg noted that Litvinov was aware of Germany's designs. He put down Litvinov's words verbatim: "Germany isn't really worried about the lot of the Sudeten Germans; it wants to liquidate Czechoslovakia as a whole."

In September, Litvinov spoke to Jean Payart, the French chargé d'affaires. He pointed out that under the existing treaty, France was obliged to aid Czechoslovakia in the event of a German attack, and suggested that military experts of the three countries should gather and discuss military aid to Czechoslovakia. "To defend Czechoslovakia in common, there must be a preliminary discussion of how to do it," he said, and added, "We're ready for it."

France turned the suggestion down.

Meanwhile, Britain continued its intrigues. It was preparing for a deal with Hitler. When at the end of September Litvinov set out for Geneva, the crisis over the Sudetenland was at its height. German troops were massed on the Czechoslovak border. The League of Nations, however, continued to occupy itself with secondary issues. Litvinov again tried to turn its attention to European security. But the British and French spokesmen managed to keep Czechoslovakia off the agenda.

Litvinov spoke on the subject at an Assembly sitting, and more sharply than ever before. He warned that war would break out any day. "To avoid a doubtful war today and get a certain and all-embracing war tomorrow, and at the price of satisfying insatiable aggressors and destroying or crippling sovereign states," he said, "is contrary to the spirit of the Covenant of the League of Nations. To reward sabre-rattling and resort to arms or, in other words, to reward and encourage super-imperialism, is contrary to the spirit of the Kellogg-Briand Pact."

This was Litvinov's last speech in the League of Nations. It was clear that the Western powers, notably Britain and France, blinded by their hatred of the Soviet Union, had betrayed the cause of peace in Europe. They were going to betray Czechoslovakia in a bid to appease Hitler and direct his aggression against the Soviet Union. Litvinov had not the slightest doubt on this score. Andrew Rothstein recol-

lects: "When Litvinov came to Geneva in September, I asked him what he thought would happen to the Czechs. Litvinov replied that the English would sell the Czechs down the river."

Berlin was well informed of the intentions of the British and French ruling class. On September 26, Hitler again threatened to wipe out Czechoslovakia. The country's fate was sealed. To "pacify" Hitler, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and his French counterpart, Daladier, came to Munich. A four-power conference of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy, opened there on September 28. The Munich agreement, which dismembered Czechoslovakia, was signed on September 30, 1938. To journalists who met him at Croydon Airport when he returned from Germany, Chamberlain exclaimed that he had "brought back peace for our time". In fact, however, one more step had been taken towards the costliest and bloodiest war in history. This was immediately registered by Communists in Europe and America. They addressed their peoples, and pointed out that "the Munich deal has not saved the peace; it has put peace in still greater jeopardy, because it has struck at the alliance of the peace forces in all countries and encouraged the fascists".

Yes, the Nazis could not have hoped for a more favourable turn of events. After this additional bloodless victory over the Western democracies, they looked questioningly in the direction of the Soviet Union. What would be the reaction there? The letters of W. von Tippleskirch, counsellor of the German Embassy in Moscow, were seized by Americans in German archives after the war. He had reported to Berlin on October 3 and 10, 1938, a few days after the Munich deal, that "Soviet policy is bound to be adjusted in face of the failure of the pacts and alliances, the failure of the collective security idea, and the breakdown of the League of Nations... I think Stalin will punish certain people for the failure of Soviet policy, first of all Litvinov."

This letter of the Nazi diplomat is an indication of Berlin's secret designs.

After the Munich deal, events developed still more swiftly. The tragedy in Spain was approaching its culmination. The Republican army was virtually crushed. On March 5, 1939, the Soviet papers published the following notice: "Since the non-intervention committee in London has ceased to function, and has become senseless, the Council of People's Commissars has decided on March 1 to recall its representative on that committee."

On March 20, Prime Minister Emil Hacha of Czechoslovakia and Foreign Minister Hvalkovski arrived in Berlin and were at once



brought to the Reichschancellory. In the presence of Ribbentrop and Göring, they were handed a document ordering the Czechoslovak government to step down. Hitler told them Prague would be occupied by the Wehrmacht the following day. Anyone who tried to resist would be crushed.

In those tragic days, the Soviet government did its utmost to avert fresh acts of aggression by Hitler Germany. Soviet diplomats in London, Paris, and other European capitals redoubled their activity. They appealed to the public at large, and negotiated at foreign ministries.

Litvinov did not go to Geneva again. But Soviet efforts in the League of Nations had not been wasted. Under Soviet pressure, the League had discussed all breaches of world peace. This had tended to deter potential aggressors, compelling them to reckon with public opinion. Though the League had hardly ever applied economic sanctions, the discussions in the Council and Assembly had forced European and other states to cut back exports of strategic goods to Germany and Italy. But, all in all, the League proved incapable of ensuring peace.

Three years after the Second World War began, British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden said the old League of Nations had failed because the forces that would have held it up were not represented on it. Luigi Sturzo, an American scholar, produced a still more annihilating assessment. The mistake, he said, was that the League of Nations consisted of countries that refused to assume responsibilities concomitant with League membership. They became enemies of the League and sabotaged it.

But, surely, the reasons for the League's failure were more deep-rooted. In the 14 years of its existence, it had operated primarily as an anti-Soviet instrument. True, the Soviet Union's admission to the League held back the consolidation of the anti-Soviet forces. But the anti-Soviet trend could not be entirely overcome in just five years. Doubly so, because Britain and France, the leading capitalist countries in the League, had set themselves the aim of channelling the Nazi peril against the Soviet Union.

When it was clear that, with Austria in its pocket, Germany would turn its attention to Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union began negotiating a "peace front" against Hitlerite aggression with Britain and France. Litvinov, who conducted the negotiations, was perfectly well aware that as long as Chamberlain was Prime Minister, there would be no accord on this score. But the negotiations as such helped to foster anti-fascist sentiment.

Yet it was becoming ever more difficult for Litvinov to function.

Though he was still in charge of the Soviet diplomatic service he noticed that a vacuum was gradually forming around him. After the 18th Party Congress, following Stalin's instructions, Potemkin published foreign-policy articles in the journal *Bolshevik* and other mass media. Litvinov learned about them only after they appeared in print. New people came to the Foreign Commissariat, appointed without Litvinov's knowledge. It reached him that not all Soviet ambassadors sent him the requisite information. Many of them, he learned, were sending their reports over his head to Molotov. He learned that in some countries diplomatic functions had been given over to Soviet trade representatives, and that David Kandelaki, the trade representative in Berlin, had for a fairly long time maintained direct contacts on diplomatic matters with Molotov. Considering the highly complicated situation, Litvinov was willing to concede that there could be ambiguous moves and possible compromises, but that this should happen behind his back was wholly contrary to the principles of Leninist diplomacy.

Litvinov became aware that he was no longer able to change anything. So he sat down and wrote his resignation. But once it was written, an inner struggle began: should he submit it or not? Would it not be cowardly to abandon his post at this troubled time? Was it honourable? But, on the other hand, why the isolation? Was he no longer trusted? Things were happening behind his back for which he was no longer answerable. Did that mean he should resign? He pondered and pondered, and put the resignation away in his safe.

After the Soviet Union withdrew from the non-interference committee, Litvinov left Moscow no more. He negotiated with the British. At the end of March, a Japanese delegation came to negotiate fishery in Far Eastern waters. The Japanese wanted more favourable terms, hoping to win a free hand for spying against the Soviet Union. Acting on government instructions, Litvinov made no concessions to them.

Outwardly, he was as collected, methodical, and poised as before. Nothing escaped him. He reacted promptly to whatever the other side happened to do. He never lost his self-control—just as calm as ever in his dealings with colleagues, and just as considerate to his family. On April 3, 1939, Litvinov wrote his wife in Sverdlovsk, where she was running a course of English, that he would at once send her the hot-water bottle she had asked for in her latest letter. "I'm worried about your bronchitis," he wrote, "for you had it the previous winter, and I know how liable it is to drag on. Do your best to get rid of it. Don't go outdoors until you do, or it will last for months."

But the tension that had accumulated sought an escape. "Only

now, after we have finally signed the fishery agreement," he wrote, "I realised how tired I am. The Japanese tormented me. They were like a plague. I had to keep myself in hand or I'd start slapping their faces. I'm glad it's over. A British delegation was here for four or five days. Its leader was a typical specimen of the more brazen upper crust. His wife was an Anglicized American, very energetic and hungry for entertainment. She went to the theatre every night. 'Swan Lake' with Ulanova delighted her. She and her husband were enchanted beyond measure. But all I want is to relax for a few days, at least at the summer house—especially now, with spring on its way."

Did Litvinov have any inkling that soon he would have lots of time to relax—not for a few days but for nearly two years? In the evenings, coming home from the Commissariat, he looked troubled and morose.

April 1939 abounded in tension-filled work. Litvinov received foreign diplomats, conducted negotiations, conferred with members of the Collegium, and interviewed a colleague who had been appointed to the embassy in the Mongolian People's Republic. He spoke to him at length of his tasks, gave advice, and wished him a good trip.

On April 27 a meaningful episode occurred. Litvinov was summoned by Stalin. Also summoned was Maisky, ambassador in London, who was then in Moscow. Here is how Maisky described the interview:

"It was the first time I saw the relationship between Litvinov, Stalin, and Molotov. The atmosphere was strained to the extreme. Though Stalin looked outwardly calm, puffing on his pipe all the time, it was obvious he was annoyed with Litvinov. As for Molotov, he was simply vicious, attacking Litvinov and accusing him of everything under the sun."

On his way from London to Moscow, Maisky had stopped over in Helsinki, where he paid a courtesy visit at the Foreign Ministry. Foreign Minister Erkko, who had been ambassador to Moscow from 1929 to 1932, asked him what he thought of the European situation, Maisky replied vaguely, as he had done in London talking with other diplomats. Maisky's conversation with Erkko reached the press. Litvinov was reprimanded for it, and told that his people had got out of control.

"What right had Maisky to speak to Erkko?" Stalin asked.

"Comrade Stalin, it was an ordinary conversation between two diplomats; he could not avoid it," Litvinov replied.

Stalin said no more. On the following day, Maisky left for London with a sense of dismay at having let Litvinov down. He could not have known that Litvinov's fate as People's Commissar was already sealed. On May 4, in London, at a diplomatic reception, Maisky was approached by the Chinese ambassador who asked him if he knew

the latest news. "Litvinov has resigned," the Chinese diplomat said. "I was stunned," Maisky recollected.

Here is what happened in Moscow. In the early morning of May 4, the Foreign Commissariat building was surrounded by troops of the Commissariat for Internal Affairs. Molotov, Georgy Malenkov,<sup>42</sup> and Lavrenty Beria,<sup>63</sup> who arrived at dawn, informed Litvinov that he was dismissed from the post of People's Commissar.

Around 10 in the morning Litvinov went to his summer house. A platoon of soldiers was already there. The government telephone was disconnected. Litvinov used the city phone to get in touch with Beria.

"Why this business of the guards?"

Beria giggled.

"You're valuable, Maxim Maximovich. We must guard you."

Litvinov dropped the phone.

Around noon, Molotov and Beria returned to the Foreign Commissariat. Beria summoned Dekanosov, one of his lieutenants. Foreign Commissariat employees were not allowed to enter the building. They were kept in the lobby. Then they were called. Molotov told them he was now People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He also said he would restore order in personnel matters.

Beria looked closely at the people around him. His gaze fell on Pavel Nazarov, acting General Secretary of the Foreign Commissariat and secretary of its Komsomol branch. Shortly before, his father Stepan Nazarov, an old Bolshevik and member of the Party's Central Control Commission and a delegate to the 17th Party Congress, had been arrested. Pavel was immediately expelled from the Party, but Litvinov saw to it that his membership was restored.

"Nazarov," Beria addressed him, "why was your father arrested?"

"You are probably better informed about it than I."

Beria chuckled:

"You and me will talk about this later."

Zina, Nazarov's wife, recollected:

"On May 4, Pavel did not return from work. He had gone to work in a new suit, without a vest, which he did not like. Around midnight, he telephoned, said not to worry, he would come home late. I was about to go to bed when the bell rang. I opened the door, and saw three men in uniform and two in plain clothes."

They searched the house. It took them all night. A few days later, a general meeting was called at the Foreign Commissariat, and Molotov said there had been an Italian spy in the Foreign Commissariat, whom the staff had allowed to operate with impunity.

Pavel Nazarov was made an "Italian spy" because he had been



born in Genoa, where his parents, who were professional revolutionaries, had fled from a Siberia convict camp. Pavel had lived in Genoa until he was three. A Bolshevik returning to tsarist Russia took him to Samara,\* where the Nazarovs had relatives.

After Litvinov's dismissal, many members of the Foreign Commissariat's staff were arrested. They were seized either in the street or at home or at their office. That was when Fyodor Raskolnikov<sup>64</sup> would say in a letter to Stalin what no one had ventured to say before.

"Though you knew that owing to our shortage of personnel, every experienced and trained diplomat was doubly valuable," he wrote, "you have lured nearly all the Soviet ambassadors to Moscow, and destroyed them one by one. You have completely torn down the apparatus of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs."

Litvinov was one of those Stalin wanted to destroy. He was on the brink of the abyss. The same lot that had befallen his colleagues, was lying in wait for him. All Litvinov's people died in prison. And all of them have been posthumously reinstated, including Pavel Nazarov. Here is an extract from a reinstatement paper: "In view of newly-established circumstances, the sentence of the military tribunal has been annulled, and the case has been closed owing to the absence of a criminal offence."

After returning from her prison camp in 1958, Nazarov's wife was invited to the district committee of the Party, and told her husband was considered a member of the CPSU since 1931, while his expulsion was invalidated.

A few days after the above events, an *ukase* was published, relieving Litvinov of his post. The world reacted with dismay. Nearly in all countries, urgent cabinet meetings were called to discuss the situation. A sharp change was expected in Soviet foreign policy.

Alexandra Kollontai, then Soviet ambassador in Stockholm, put down in her diary: "Litvinov has left the post of Foreign Commissar. This has created a commotion in Sweden and all over the world. Friends have been calling all day. Doctor Ada Nilsson, a sincere friend, came running to find out what has happened. I have never seen her so confused."

"Every country has its own version of Litvinov's resignation. The Finns say he was dismissed because he failed to settle the question of the Aland Islands. The British and French say it was because he failed to reach an agreement with the former World War allies.

"Nazi Germany is elated. Officials in Hitler's hierarchy are rejoic-

\* Now Kuibyshev.

ing. They are happy Litvinov, who had all these years fought fiercely against German arming, has left the stage. Enemies of the Soviet Union are yelling about a split in Soviet ruling circles.

"What is Litvinov thinking about? Litvinov, who has been a whole era? His name is inscribed in history..."

The world press wrote prolifically of Litvinov's resignation. Journalists and diplomats, writers and statesmen, made conjectures and guesses. Expressing the concern of French progressives, Edouard Herriot said that the last great friend of collective security had stepped down.

Stalin was, naturally, aware that the resignation of a statesman whose name was closely associated with the Soviet Union's foreign policy of peace would unavoidably create an undesirable reaction among the Soviet Union's friends abroad, and above all among nations that were pinning special hopes on the Soviet Union in face of the increasing Nazi threat. He knew this, and took time to make up his mind. Litvinov's prestige at home and abroad was very high.

But now the step was taken, and had to be justified. In a speech on October 31, 1939, Molotov introduced a new formula, "primitive anti-fascism", which was quickly picked up by obsequious lecturers. This confusing and demoralising statement was made at a time when Hitler had already started the Second World War and was conducting military, political, and diplomatic preparations for an attack on the Soviet Union.

Litvinov disappeared from the political scene. He devoted himself to private life if that description is fitting to describe his first retirement. Initially, he and his family stayed at the summer house near Moscow, then he was given a city flat. No one came to see him. The first person to visit Litvinov was Boris Stein. Anastasia Petrova came too. Litvinov was happy to see them.

He followed the march of world events with concentrated attention. The picture was not a happy one. The British and French were still playing their dual game, prodding Germany to make war on the Soviet Union, and conducting separate negotiations with Hitler. Firm and swift action was essential. The country had to win time and prepare to defend itself. Negotiations with Germany proved unavoidable.

Hitler's Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop flew in to Moscow on August 23, and a non-aggression pact with Germany was signed on the same day.

In the evening, Chaikovsky's "Swan Lake" was shown at the Bolshoi, with Galina Ulanova as Odetta-Odilia. Litvinov went to see it. He was accompanied by a guard. This was his first appearance in pub-

lic after his resignation. Shortly before the curtain rose, Molotov and Ribbentrop appeared in the government box. The orchestra played the national anthem of Germany and the Internationale. Everybody stood. There was applause. But Litvinov did not rise. He and his wife were in the third row. No one came up to them. Not until the last interval. Their old acquaintance, Nina Mirnaya, wife of the dismissed Soviet diplomat Semyon Mirny, came up and said hello. Litvinov remarked, "Oh, you're a brave woman."

The dreary months of enforced inactivity dragged on slowly. Litvinov spent most of the time in the country, walking in the woods. He followed the papers closely. On rare occasions, his closest friends visited him—Boris Stein, Yakov Surits (former Soviet ambassador to France), and Anastasia Petrova. They spoke mainly of the weather, of books, and of the new films.

In 1940, Litvinov wrote Stalin a letter, asking for a job. Not Stalin but Andrei Zhdanov<sup>65</sup> summoned him and offered the post of Chairman of the Committee for Culture. Litvinov turned the offer down, saying it was not his field.

Some time later, Litvinov's membership of the Party's Central Committee was terminated. At the Central Committee's plenary meeting, Litvinov was true to himself. A tense silence reigned in the hall. Stalin was obviously intent on not letting Litvinov speak. But, as many times before in his life, Litvinov did not wait to be denied a hearing and walked to the rostrum uninvited.

"My more than forty years' record as Party member obliges me to say what I think of what has happened. I do not understand why I am being dealt with in such peremptory style."

He went on to say that it was necessary and possible to delay, if not totally avoid, a war, and set forth his ideas of what the Soviet Union should do vis-à-vis Britain and France. He said Germany intended to attack the Soviet Union. Of this, he added, he was deeply convinced. Then he said there were hardly any old Bolsheviks left on the Central Committee, and quite a number of Mensheviks, one of them being Andrei Vyshinsky.<sup>66</sup>

Litvinov spoke for ten minutes. One could hear a pin drop. Molotov alone made heckling comments. Stalin, smoking his pipe, strode slowly up and down the stage.

As soon as Litvinov finished, Stalin began to speak. He rejected everything Litvinov had said. When he stopped speaking, Litvinov faced him and asked:

"Does that mean you consider me an enemy of the people?"

Stalin stopped, and said slowly:

"We do not consider you an enemy of the people. We consider you an honest revolutionary..."

Did Litvinov at that moment recall the now remote time when he first met Stalin, shortly before the Party's Fifth Congress? It had been an uneasy congress which opened in London on April 30, 1907, at 6.45 p.m. on the premises of a London church.

The previous few weeks, Litvinov had been on Party business in Paris, living in an attic on Boulevard Pont Royal. The Party needed money to lease premises and finance the coming of at least a minimum of delegates. There was no choice but to appeal to Maxim Gorky. The writer happened to be out of cash, but to help the Party he asked a certain British millionaire to subsidise the congress. The latter agreed (such things did happen) but wanted all delegates to sign receipts for the money. Litvinov, who was the Party's treasurer, had to deal with these things himself.

Delegates of the Tiflis branch of the Party came at the very end of April. Among them was Joseph Djughashvili (Stalin). He had been in Berlin the previous three months and was now going to London. That was when, in Paris, Litvinov had first met him. He was 30 then, and Stalin was 27. Litvinov was well known in the Party, Djughashvili-Stalin was known only for his activity in the Transcaucasus. Litvinov took Stalin to his place at Pont Royal, showed him the sights of Paris, spoke of London and various British customs. Then they both left for the congress.

After the October Revolution, when Litvinov was appointed Soviet Russia's ambassador to Britain, the millionaire who had subsidised the Fifth Congress asked Litvinov to return the debt, showing the receipts he had from its delegates, including a receipt from Djughashvili. It took all of Litvinov's powers of persuasion to settle the matter.

Now he faced Stalin, and the latter said, "We consider you an honest revolutionary." What Litvinov did not know was that a trial of "enemy of the people Litvinov" was being rehearsed behind his back with Stalin's knowledge.

In those very days, in Beria's office, Yevgeni Gnedin, chief of the Foreign Commissariat's Press Department, arrested in 1939, was being interrogated. Beria and Kobulov, his deputy, sat on either side of Gnedin and played a game they called "pendulum", punching the man sitting between them on the side of the head with their fists. They kept hitting him for a long time, and demanded that he testify against Litvinov.

Gnedin lost consciousness, was revived, and the beating continued. His mouth bleeding, Gnedin said again and again:



"Litvinov is an honest man, a faithful son of the Communist Party and the people."

After Litvinov's resignation, the world press, government quarters, and public leaders in various countries, speculated about the diplomat's future. There was the conjecture that he would share the lot of his deputies and closest associates. The foreign press wondered why he had survived the grim years of repression.

Since the question arose a long time ago, and speculation still continues, an answer has to be given—especially now, when in the setting of glasnost blank spots in the history of the Soviet Union are disappearing one after another.

The fact that Litvinov enjoyed enormous prestige across the country cannot be the sole explanation. During the Stalin cult times, men who held more prominent posts than Litvinov, members of the Party's Political Bureau (which Litvinov was not), had been disgraced and repressed. So, there must also have been other reasons.

By 1939, Litvinov was playing one of the leading roles in world politics. Soviet diplomacy's efforts for peace in the League of Nations and at other international forums, were associated with his name. So was the Soviet Union's opposition to fascism.

Litvinov's dismissal had caused elation in the upper echelons of power in Nazi Germany. Conversely, it caused dismay in government quarters and among the public in most countries of the world. And Stalin had to reckon with that.

It must also have been important for Stalin that throughout his revolutionary, political, and diplomatic activity, Litvinov had never taken part in any factional group. For that was one of the factors Stalin often used as a pretext for liquidating Party leaders and statesmen.

Furthermore, Litvinov was not repressed, I think, because Stalin had kept him in reserve. This calls for an explanation.

A most suspicious and distrustful politician, Stalin was convinced, however, that Germany would not breach the non-aggression pact, at least for a fairly long time. Marshal Georgy Zhukov, in his memoirs, described Stalin's reaction to the news that Hitler's armies had attacked the Soviet Union as one of total prostration. His faith in his own genius and foresight was badly shaken. To a circle of close friends, Litvinov had once said about Stalin, "Eastern rulers and the various shahs and other despots—those he will twist around his little finger. But the Western world and Western politics—there he is out of his depth."

And June 22, 1941, the day Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, bore this out.

Hitler Germany's attack halted the secret preparations for Litvinov's trial, begun three months after his resignation. The war imposed its own terms, and this in the diplomatic field as well. The prestige Litvinov had earned by his pre-war activity could come in useful. None other than Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's closest adviser, gave Stalin to understand that the U.S. President would welcome Litvinov's return to a high diplomatic post, and wished him to visit the United States.

## Chapter 11

### THE COMEBACK

Everything is in perpetual motion—sometimes swift, sometimes slow. Then something happens that changes things.

Litvinov's enforced idleness was coming to an end. The early morning of June 22, 1941 began. He was up and about, then read the papers. They reported one more football match, and an item said thousands of vacationers were leaving for the Crimea and the Caucasus. The reports about the world situation were unusually tranquil. A war raged somewhere far away. The most important reports in the central papers were given on the front page under a common heading, Stop Press. He read the telegrams attentively, shaking his head. Havas News Agency reported that French troops had moved out of Damascus, and that British troops had moved in. Italy had closed its consulates in the United States. The British government reported that the country's military expenditures of recent weeks had amounted to 80.5 million pounds, and called on the people to use less coal, gas, and electricity. There was also a cable from New York saying Ford had signed an agreement with the Automobile Workers' Union.\*

After reading the papers, Litvinov went for a walk (accompanied by a guard). It was ten in the morning, eight hours since the Nazis had attacked the Soviet Union. Kiev, Minsk, Riga, Tallinn, and Smolensk were already ablaze. Thousands of soldiers had already laid down their lives on the border. Flames caused by German bombing had already engulfed hospitals and orphanages. Children were dying in agony...

On returning from his walk, Litvinov switched on the radio. An excited voice said to stand by for an important communication.

\* From 1939 to 1941, up to the beginning of the war, I was in charge of the foreign news department of the newspaper *Trud*. I was at the paper's printshop during the night of June 21-22, and recall receiving the TASS copy cited above and having the items put on the front page under the Stop Press head. At four in the morning I called TASS and asked if anything else of importance would come in. A sleepy voice said nothing more was expected, and I "put the paper to bed".—Author.

Litvinov and Boris Stein, who was with him, wondered what it would be. A few seconds later, Molotov announced over the radio that war had broken out.

"That seals Hitler's fate," Litvinov said.

He wrote two letters—one to Molotov, asking for a job, and the other to the blood transfusion centre, offering his blood for the wounded.

The blood transfusion centre replied immediately. It thanked him and said courteously that the blood of 65-year-old people was not needed so far; they would let him know if it would be.

Molotov summoned him a few days later. His speech was dry and official. He asked what job Litvinov expected. Litvinov replied, "Your job, of course."

That was the end of their conversation.

Soon there was a call from the Kremlin. Stalin asked him to come, for there would be a talk with foreign diplomats.

Litvinov came in the clothes he had been wearing the last few years. The Kremlin was the same as he had always known it—austere, imposing, magnificent. But there were more military men around. Litvinov walked slowly up the palace stairs, looking at people closely.

Umansky was the first person he knew whom he met in the corridor of the Kremlin Palace. The man smiled in embarrassment, searching desperately for something to say.

"Maxim Maximovich, maybe I deserve to be amnestied?"

"Why amnestied?" Litvinov replied. "You never broke the law."

The reception began a few minutes later. Stalin said hello, looked at Litvinov's clothes, and asked:

"Why not a black suit?"

Litvinov replied phlegmatically:

"It's moth-eaten."

On the following day, Litvinov was re-enrolled in the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

The foreign press reported that Litvinov had been seen in the Kremlin. Speculation began. American and British news agencies and newspaper editors asked for articles and interviews. Litvinov began writing. His articles appeared in British and American papers.

On July 8, late in the evening, Litvinov came to the Radio Committee. At Stalin's request, he would speak on the radio, addressing the English-speaking nations.

Yuri Kozlovsky, Litvinov's former aide, who had been transferred to the French Department of the Radio Committee in 1940, recollected: "I was in the corridor at the radio station when Litvinov



appeared. He was very modestly dressed, and had a walking stick."

"What are you doing here, Maxim Maximovich?" Kozlovsky asked.

"I've come to speak on the radio," Litvinov replied, and asked Kozlovsky how he was.

French writer Jean Richard Bloch had spoken before Litvinov. "Litvinov asked about him," Kozlovsky related, "then stepped into the studio."

Two hours later, teletypewriters in the editorial offices of Moscow's newspapers called attention to an important report: Litvinov had spoken in English, telling listeners what he thought of the current situation, and describing Hitler's evil plan—attacking countries one by one in a bid to gain world supremacy.

A few hours later, news agencies reported that America, Britain, Canada, and Australia had heard Litvinov's radio talk. He called on all nations to deny Hitler time for respite, to hit back all together, with the maximum energy. Litvinov's talk ended with the following words, "The peoples of the Soviet Union... have risen as one man to fight a patriotic war against Hitlerism, and will fight that war along with other freedom-loving peoples until fascist obscurantism and barbarity are wiped out."

The talk was published in all Soviet newspapers. During the summer, Litvinov made a few more radio appearances. On August 15 he wrote to his wife in Kuibyshev: "Received a telegram from the editor of *Reynolds News*, asking for a contribution. I sent one, but had difficulties with the translation. I have neither a stenographer nor an English typist, and cannot write by hand. So I had the piece translated at the Informbureau, but the translation wasn't good enough. I had to make corrections, and there was no one to retype the copy, and I don't even have a typewriter. I'm writing this, so you'll know how much I miss you.

"I really do think of you all the time. Sometimes I have qualms of conscience for sending you away too early. You must be suffering discomforts and privations. But it was impossible to know the right time, and, generally speaking, it was better and inevitable that you should go to a safe place. Here, in Moscow, there's nothing new. I pay no attention to the air-raid warnings."

In those few months, Litvinov lived in the country. The chief of the guards was worried: now his orders were not only to guard, but also to protect Litvinov, while the latter paid no attention to enemy planes, even when they were dropping bombs. The guards had dug trenches round the house, but he refused to hide in them.

One day, when enemy planes were practically overhead, and things thundered all around, one of the guards, in total dismay, shouted,

"Lie down!" Litvinov turned, looked him in the face, and asked, "What did you say?"

Litvinov had his radio talks as before, and wrote for the foreign press. Stalin welcomed it. He knew Litvinov's prestige would win friends for the Soviet Union, especially in the United States and Britain.

But Litvinov's goodwill mission ended as abruptly as it began. Foreign correspondents had often asked him what he thought of the Soviet-German pact. He evaded the question, but finally, after mulling it over, decided to speak his mind. I think this calls for a closer look, because, among other things, enemies of the Soviet Union ascribed to him what he never said.

A shrewd politician, a Leninist to the marrow, a man who knew that sometimes compromise was essential, Litvinov came to the conclusion that the non-aggression pact with Germany had been unavoidable, that the Soviet government had had no other choice in 1939. Its long and resolute promotion of a collective security system had foundered on the resistance of the British and French. The imperialists in those two countries, Litvinov told the foreign correspondents, "had done everything they could to goad Hitler Germany against the Soviet Union by secret deals and provocative moves. In the circumstances, the Soviet Union could either accept the German proposal for a non-aggression treaty and thus secure a period of peace in which to redouble preparations to repulse the aggressor, or turn down Germany's proposal and let the warmongers in the Western camp push the Soviet Union into an armed conflict with Germany in unfavourable circumstances and in a setting of complete isolation. In this situation, the Soviet government was compelled to make the difficult choice and conclude a non-aggression treaty with Germany."

Litvinov added, "I, too, would probably have concluded a pact with Germany, though a bit differently."

That was what Litvinov said to the foreign correspondents. The text was later handed to Molotov for approval. The latter said it should not go on the air. Litvinov was suspended for giving an unauthorised interview to foreign journalists.

Again, dreary days began. Litvinov saw nobody, and spent most of his time in the country, walking in the woods.

Came the first wartime autumn. The Germans were advancing all along the front. In the north they had come close to Murmansk, in the south they controlled nearly all of the Ukraine and were poised to lunge into the Caucasus, hoping to capture the oil-bearing regions and thrust towards the Middle East.

The situation around Moscow was grim. More than 70 infantry, tank and motorised Nazi divisions were massed there. Hitler hoped to gain possession of the capital before the winter's cold. On October 2, the Germans launched a ferocious offensive. They struck from east of Smolensk, bypassing Kalinin in the north and Bryansk in the southwest. They captured Vyazma, then Gzhatsk. They were near the gateway to Moscow, the town of Mozhaisk, and seized it in a hard-fought battle. Then, in a bid to envelop Moscow, they took Volokolamsk, and reached the close approaches to the capital.

In the morning of October 16, factories began closing down in Moscow. Crowds of people streamed east along Gorky Highway, blocked up as it was with army lorries, guns, and carts that were going the other way, to the frontlines.

Soviet resistance increased from day to day. The German rate of advance dropped accordingly. Divisions from Siberia and the Urals were hastening to Moscow's aid. Positioned close to the capital, the Soviet troops would deliver a crushing blow. Dropping their arms, bleeding, leaving their dead behind, the Germans rolled back. The Red Army buried Hitler's maniacal plans right there, close to Moscow, when it already seemed he had reached his goal.

In the evening of October 16, the chief of the guards asked Litvinov to leave for Kuibyshev at once. He was confused, said only two or three hours were left to get away, and begged Litvinov to hurry. If they missed the train, there was no telling how they would leave.

Litvinov replied indifferently that, in effect, he was ready to go at once, all his possessions were on him, there was nothing he wanted to pack.

In the unheated, frosty railway car, Litvinov was given a compartment. His guard came with him. The train was slow, kept stopping time after time, was detained at stations for hours, letting military trains go by. It arrived in Kuibyshev on the seventh day. By the end of October most of the commissariats and other central offices had been evacuated there. The city was overcrowded. Litvinov's family lived in a tiny flat. His secretary, Anastasia Petrova, stayed with them.

After the unhappy business of the interview which had aroused Molotov's anger, Litvinov had stayed on the payroll as a Foreign Commissariat adviser. Save for a small group, the entire Commissariat had also been evacuated to Kuibyshev, Litvinov was told to turn up at work every day. He did so reluctantly because he saw no sense in it.

In the evenings, friends would drop in. The writer Ilya Ehrenburg lived across the street, so did the diplomats Umansky and Yevgeny Rubinin. Umansky had been recalled from the embassy in Ameri-

ca, but, for some reason, was not being sent back. He was troubled by it and waited impatiently for orders to fly to the United States. Rubinin, former Soviet ambassador in Belgium, had returned to Moscow after the Nazis overran that country, and was also retained in the diplomatic service. Soon, composer Dmitry Shostakovich, evacuated from beleaguered Leningrad with his wife and two children, moved into a flat a floor below Litvinov's. From then on music sounded in the house: Shostakovich was putting finishing touches to his Seventh Symphony.

Early in November 1941, things looked up for Litvinov.

After Hitler Germany had attacked the Soviet Union, statesmen in Britain and the United States declared their countries would aid it. But in the anti-Hitler coalition, deep-going differences remained between the socialist Soviet Union and its imperialist partners. It was important to expand ties with the USA, where certain quarters cynically advised Washington to look on while the Soviet Union bled to death.

The ambassador to the United States should be a man with prestige and personal contacts with President Roosevelt.

Late one night, Molotov called from Moscow. He asked the man on duty at the Foreign Commissariat if he knew where Litvinov lived. He ordered him to go to Litvinov's house at once and say he had been appointed Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and Soviet Ambassador to the United States. He was to say the appointment was made by Stalin. "Watch his face. See how he reacts," Molotov added, "and report to me at once."

The man on duty, a young lad, was about to say he was not sure he would cope with the assignment, and ask Molotov to send someone more competent. But Molotov had put down the phone.

Ten minutes later the young lad was in the tiny hall of Litvinov's flat. Litvinov, wearing an old housecoat, heard him out, mumbled something, and asked:

"Couldn't they find some other way of informing me?"

"Excuse me, Comrade Litvinov, but I'm carrying out orders, and must have your reply," the embarrassed young man answered.

A long pause ensued. Litvinov seemed to be concentrating. Finally, he said:

"Well, there can be only one answer. There's a war, and I'm ready for any assignment."

"Molotov said to ask when you can leave."

"It won't take long," Litvinov said.

"You must fly to Moscow at once. Comrade Stalin is waiting. The plane is standing by. D'you need any help?"



"Thank you, I need nothing."

The young man returned to the office, and reported his conversation to Molotov. Molotov asked him to repeat everything Litvinov had said word for word.

There are times in the life of every man when he feels an extraordinary influx of energy, proud that someone needs him, that he is involved in something big. He is capable of extraordinary achievements, exploits, or discoveries. That was the feeling Litvinov had that night in Kuibyshev. Controlling his emotions, he told the family that he had been called up again, that he was back in harness. The following day, he flew to Moscow.

The flight from Kuibyshev to Moscow is described in his memoirs by Nikolai Palgunov, the then chief of the Foreign Commissariat's Press Department who later became General Director of TASS, the Soviet news agency:

"We took off around 11 a.m. on November 9. The plane was fully loaded. It had a revolving turret, and after two hours in the air the radioman, a soldier, took up his station beside the machine-gun. Among the passengers were Maxim Litvinov, who had just been appointed ambassador to the United States, two generals, my subordinate V. V. Kozhemiako, a few men from the Council of People's Commissars, and me... We were approaching Noginsk when the pilot was ordered to turn back. Germans were bombing the place. We flew low, almost touching the treetops. A new radio despatch said to wait a few minutes, the Germans seemed to be leaving. We flew circles over the forest. One more radio message said enemy planes were bombing the Noginsk-Moscow road. The orders were to land in Noginsk. We did, and a quarter of an hour later they found a coach for us, and we set out for Moscow. Nazi planes were circling overhead. It was quite dark. The Germans fired flares, lighting up the terrain. Flak was popping somewhere nearby. Nazi bombs burst in the vicinity. We arrived in Moscow late at night, in complete darkness. Planes roared over the city: an air alarm."

The city had changed. At this time of the year, the Moscow boulevards were usually filled with children, their ringing voices welcoming the first snow. Now only soldiers were to be seen in the streets, and lorries carrying barrage balloons. Moscow looked grim, shabby, and quiet. In factories and workshops, and at railway stations people were hard at work. Along the roads troops marched, and in the dug-outs near Perkhushkovo where General of the Army Zhukov had his headquarters, the regiments were poised for the powerful, perfectly timed strike that would drive Hitler's armies away from Moscow.

Litvinov arrived at the Kremlin at the appointed hour, and was immediately received by Stalin. The first few months of the war had evidently not been easy. Stalin's visage, always severe and withdrawn, had become still more so, and dark circles had appeared under his eyes. He wore his usual semi-military costume. Litvinov was dressed in the suit he had put on for the diplomatic reception in the early days of the war. This time, Stalin made no comment about his clothes. He was cordial, and welcomed him warmly.

Molotov was present, but sat at the back of the room in silence.

Stalin and Litvinov sat down facing each other. Stalin let sleeping dogs lie, as though there had been no removal from the Central Committee on that fateful night in May 1939. He was not in the habit of making excuses. The other reason why he did not refer to the past was that he knew Litvinov well—for nearly 40 years. And he got down to business at once, speaking of Litvinov's diplomatic mission in his usual, somewhat thick voice.

The main thing was to prod the Americans into action. The sooner they entered the war, the better. Stalin knew the difficulties Roosevelt faced. He knew, too, that the President was not over-eager to help the Soviets. But the President was clever, and far-sighted.

Litvinov listened attentively.

"I'd like to know more about the war situation," he said in the end. "I'll have to appear before the American public, and want to be abreast of the latest news."

"Very well," Stalin replied, and looked in Molotov's direction. After a pause, he continued:

"Comrade Litvinov, you'll have to devote yourself to war supplies. They're important, and doubly so because at the moment we're only converting our industry to wartime."

Litvinov asked about Umansky, who would now be out of a job. Stalin glanced at Molotov again, and said they would find something for Umansky to do. Molotov nodded.

Knowing this was the moment when the future of a man, whom he considered a most capable diplomat, was hanging in the balance, Litvinov immediately asked:

"That means Umansky will stay with us, in the Foreign Commissariat, as a member of the Collegium?"

"Yes, as a member of the Collegium," Stalin replied.

Litvinov asked whom he could take along to the United States. Stalin said he could choose anyone he wanted, bade him farewell, and wished him a good trip.

That evening, Litvinov flew back to Kuibyshev. The weather was bad, and the plane had to make a forced landing in Penza. There was

no place to stay the night at the poorly equipped airport. On learning that Litvinov was among the passengers, the airport chief offered him his office to stay in. At first, Litvinov refused the offer, then had second thoughts: he had to be rested the following day. But sleep did not come, and he went outdoors. The sky was clouded, a blizzard was raising clouds of snow. The airport chief, too, was not asleep. He followed Litvinov around, seemed to want to ask him something, but did not dare. Litvinov turned to him with a most prosaic question: where was the toilet? The toilet? They had none, the airport chief said, and added Litvinov could pick whatever spot he liked. He invited him to use the porch. Litvinov chuckled, for the first time in three years.

A flight of 30,000 kilometres lay ahead, from Kuibyshev to Washington across Asia along a giant arc marked by Astrakhan, Baku, Teheran, Baghdad, Basra, Calcutta, Bangkok, Singapore, the Philippines, and Hawaii. The western route across the Atlantic was unsafe.

On November 12, 1941, Litvinov and his wife, and Anastasia Petrova, took off from Kuibyshev aboard a Douglas plane armed with a machine-gun in case of an encounter with Nazi planes. They arrived safely in Astrakhan, then landed in Baku. From Baku they flew to Teheran, where they were to board a British warplane. But when Litvinov and his companions came to the airport at the fixed time, they found out that the aircraft had taken off five minutes before. Why it had left ahead of schedule could not be determined. And the next plane was in three days. Since Litvinov had not turned up in Baghdad at the specified time, rumours spread that he was missing. A question to that effect was asked in British Parliament. In the meantime, Litvinov took off from Teheran in another plane. In Iraq it landed at a British war base near Lake Habbaniya. As they were coming in for the landing, the surrounding terrain looked deserted. But once on the ground, Litvinov saw the British had built a comfortable oasis for themselves amidst the desert, with little gardens, and even four miniature churches. The airfield chief resided in a splendid villa, where he had hot water and magnificent bathrooms. Noiseless servants in white Arab gowns moved about the place, and reverently asked Litvinov's wife and secretary if they wanted their dresses ironed for dinner and the reception. Yet those two ladies had nothing to wear for dinner aside from what they had on them, let alone evening gowns for the reception.

Litvinov was given the best room in the villa, with a bath and other amenities. Thinking back to the Penza airfield, he jested, "I shan't need a porch here."

The Habbaniya garrison had recently been besieged by local rebels. But that was forgotten. They had dinner parties and dances, gossip, tennis competitions, and intelligence officers wearing romantic bournouses mesmerised the ladies by their resemblance to the legendary Lawrence of Arabia. All this was in striking contrast to what was happening in Europe.

From Habbaniya, Litvinov and his companions left for India aboard a flying-boat.

The flight across the East gave Litvinov an opportunity to see the extraordinary Oriental world with its fabulous wealth on one pole and abject poverty on the other.

After a brief stopover in Calcutta, the Litvinovs flew to Bangkok. Here, as in India, he was received with the traditional flowers, and heard many kind words about the Soviet Union and himself. A Siamese government spokesman made a speech in Russian. He had been a trainee at a Russian military school. But that was not the only surprise. While speeches were made and the official ceremony went on, Litvinov saw a group of Buddhist monks in orange gowns, standing silent and motionless. Having shaken hands with the diplomats and public leaders, Litvinov approached the monks. To his surprise, they raised their hands, clenched their fists, and exclaimed in fluent Russian: "Long live the great Soviet Union! Long live the heroic Red Army!"

The monks turned out to be Letts. Before the Revolution, they had adopted Buddhism, and stayed in the cells of the Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg. After the Revolution, they left the country because they did not know how the Soviets would treat Buddhist monks. They had wandered about the world a lot, and finally settled in Bangkok. The successes of the Soviet Union excited them. They admired the Red Army. The authorities did not like it. Later, one Lettish monk was savagely murdered.

The heat in Rangoon, which was the next stop, was unbearable. The British Governor-General invited the Litvinovs to a reception. The palace where it was held seemed to have been taken out of a fairy-tale. The Governor-General's wife showed the Soviet visitors all its marvels, enhancing her husband's prestige.

But the war was about to encroach on this corner of the globe as well. Japan was building up its forces in Indochina. The complacency of the local civilian and military authorities was astonishing. In Singapore, too, the commander of the British garrison bragged that the city was an unapproachable fortress. Though he was strictly a civilian, Litvinov could not help asking why they had no air-raid training, and



why there was no sign of preparation for a possible aggression. The commander assured him that the fortress was ready for battle. But when the Japanese attacked a little later, Singapore fell almost at once: it had no stores of potable water.

The same complacency could be observed on the Philippines, and even at the U.S. naval bases on Wake and Midway. What surprised Litvinov were the endless parties, with fireworks lighting up the skies after dark, the houseboat outings and joy rides on yachts and launches.

On Midway, walking on the beach and listening to the sweet sounds of a dance band playing in the park, Litvinov thought of blacked-out unheated, beleaguered Moscow, and its heroic defenders. His heart contracted.

Guam was the last stop before Hawaii. Here Litvinov did see preparations for war. Officers were packing their wives and children home to the United States, but were doing it reluctantly, as though disbelieving the prospect of war in this quiet, uncommonly beautiful corner of the world.

Litvinov wasted no time in Guam. He flew at once to Hawaii. The fabulous Hawaii Islands had a blue sky overhead, tropical vegetation that defied the imagination, and an untroubled, tranquil, complacent American garrison.

The general in charge of the garrison was a jolly man, full of questions about Europe, who brushed away the questions that Litvinov had asked at all the other stopovers—why there was no blackout training, and why people were so complacent about a possible enemy attack? But this did not trouble the general, though it was December 4, 1941, and the attack on Pearl Harbour which cost thousands of American lives and saw the destruction of America's biggest and best warships, was just a few days away.

On December 5, the Litvinovs took off from Hawaii on one of the last civilian planes. After circling over Honolulu as tradition required, the plane headed for San Francisco on a 20-hour non-stop flight across the Pacific. Litvinov put down his impressions in a letter to his son and daughter. "Dear Misha and Tania," he wrote, "our impressions are so numerous we can hardly digest them. This was the first time we saw palms, coconuts, rubber trees, and sugarcane plantations. The flying was extremely tiring, especially flying over the Pacific, with nothing to rest our eyes on except clouds and ocean waves. None of us was airsick, but when the aircraft ascended to 17,000 feet, my heart condition made itself felt. During the last hours of our journey I was exhausted and had to have oxygen."

On December 6, Litvinov arrived in San Francisco—22 days and nights, and 26,000 kilometres, after the take-off in Kuibyshev. In San

Francisco, Litvinov was met by a counsellor of the Soviet Embassy, who had flown in from Washington, and the entire staff of the local Soviet Consulate. *Pravda* carried a detailed report of that event:

"Comrade Litvinov, Soviet Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the United States, arrived in San Francisco on his way to Washington on December 6. He was met by representatives of the U.S. State Department, the American Army and Navy, and the local San Francisco authorities. Also at the airfield to meet him were representatives of the Soviet Embassy and the Soviet Consulate-General in San Francisco.

"Litvinov's arrival aroused enormous interest in the United States. He was virtually besieged by countless newspaper correspondents, photographers, and newsreel cameramen.

"Litvinov made a short speech over the National Broadcasting Company's radio network, greeting the people of America and stressing the determination of the Soviet Union to fight until final victory."

A breakfast was held at the Soviet Consulate. Everybody was in high spirits. The Embassy counsellor made a brief speech. He welcomed Litvinov, mentioned his diplomatic services, then referred to Litvinov's predecessor in Washington:

"Our Embassy leadership had been immature. Now we are going to have an outstanding leader," he said.

Litvinov's retort was short: "Before leaving Moscow I was received by Comrade Stalin. He told me the line followed by my predecessor, Comrade Umansky, had been correct."

A hush fell over the room. Litvinov said there was no time to waste. Two hours later, he took off for Washington in a special plane.

The aircraft headed east across America. Below were the giant plateaus of Colorado and Nebraska, and the prairies of Dakota. Of this flight, Litvinov would write to his children: "It was the most comfortable of all the planes we had, and I took a splendid nap."

At the airfield in Washington, a large crowd of people had gathered to meet Litvinov. There were representatives of the State Department, numerous journalists and cameramen, former ambassador to Moscow Joseph Davies, writers, actors, businessmen, and clerks from government offices and private firms. Many had brought flowers. Litvinov was asked for an interview. He walked through the crowd of journalists to the microphone to tell the people of America why he had come:

"My first visit to this capital," he said, "took place at a most vital moment. This time I have come at an even more vital time, when the future of all nations, all humanity, is hanging in the balance. I know

that the American people are following events on the Eastern Front with tremendous interest and sympathy. And I can assure the American people that the Red Army and all the armed forces of the Soviet Union will carry on the struggle against Hitler Germany with the same resolve and courage that have won approval and admiration throughout the world."

Litvinov was quite prepared for the isolationists, who he expected to oppose his utterances and campaign against him. But a few hours after Litvinov's arrival in Washington, the inevitable and predictable had happened. All radio stations in the United States broadcast an urgent report: the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbour, were destroying the U.S. Navy, and bombing Honolulu.

Later, Litvinov would write to Moscow: "The uncalled for delays in Teheran and Baghdad (through the fault of the English), on account of which I had had to renounce the shorter route to America and turn east, annoyed and even embittered me, but, as though in recompense, we had good luck in Honolulu. We arrived there on a Friday and were to take an American clipper, which flew to the States once a week on Wednesdays. As luck would have it, the previous clipper had arrived from San Francisco with a considerable delay and took off on Sunday instead of Wednesday. We were aboard. If we had stayed until Wednesday, we would have been there during the Japanese bombing or would probably have had to turn back to Iraq. The Japanese air and sea-borne attack on Honolulu occurred a day and a half after our departure."

December 1941 was an agonising time for the American people. On December 6, the press had carried a Tokyo statement that Japan and the United States were negotiating in a spirit of sincerity to find a common formula for a peaceful solution in the Pacific.

Nothing indicated a storm. The average American went quietly about his business. Official Washington lived its measured life. Suddenly everything changed. The events developed precipitously. Secretary of the Navy Knox announced the estimated losses at Pearl Harbour: 19 ships badly damaged; none of the 8 battleships had survived; nearly 3,000 men and officers were killed. A blackout was ordered along the entire shoreline from Seattle to the Mexican border. Mines were laid outside New York harbour.

All America tuned in to the newscasts. Roosevelt spoke in Congress, his each phrase a hammerblow: "The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu. Yesterday the Japanese Govern-

ment also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. This morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island... I ask Congress to declare that a state of war exists between the United States and the Japanese Empire as of December 7, 1941."

Americans began to realise that the Pacific and Atlantic oceans were not large enough to let them sit out the war impassively.

Litvinov received an avalanche of letters and telegrams. They came from factory workers, film stars, millionaires, pastors, journalists, writers, farmers, and fishermen. He rejoiced over the popularity of the Soviet Union. How times had changed! Only eight years had passed since he visited the USA first. Most Americans had badly distorted ideas about the Soviet Union. Industrialisation had only just begun. Powerful capitalist America gloated: you won't manage, you won't cope, your fantastic plans will collapse. But Roosevelt was more farsighted, more pragmatic.

Now, the Soviet Union, locked in combat with Nazi Germany, was saving not only itself but the whole world. People in the street would stop Litvinov and slap him on the back: "You're Mr. Litvinov, I saw your picture in the papers."

The Red Army was winning universal admiration. But it was only the beginning. Several years of hard fighting still lay ahead. He knew how difficult it would be to arouse people in America, how difficult it would be to make the foes of the Soviet Union relent.

On December 8, Litvinov was invited to the White House. He went there with the hope he and Roosevelt would establish the sort of contact that transcends protocol, that sees both partners follow the principle of mutual advantage and benefit for their nations, that prompts them to try and understand each other rather than convert each other to their own faith.

Roosevelt received Litvinov amiably. The address he had just made in Congress and over the radio had fatigued him. He tried to be optimistic, but could not hide his alarm.

The President's schedule was timed to the minute. The official ceremony at which Litvinov submitted his credentials was begun without delay. Journalists literally besieged the White House. Cameramen switched on their spotlights. Newscasters stood by, ready to broadcast the report of the Soviet diplomat's first official visit.

Litvinov had had no opportunity to rest up after the flight from San Francisco. His eyes were inflamed, he had a shooting pain in his heart. But, as usual, he was poised, collected, concentrated on the



thought that he must bring home to the Americans that the war had reached their shores, that the fighting would have to be done together. He made this the over-riding idea in his speech. He spoke of the threat to the world of Hitler's criminal programme to destroy the political and economic independence of all lands, and to enslave all nations. Yes, all nations. Let none think they could simply look on from the sidelines. Litvinov stressed that the most painful blows had fallen to the lot of the Soviet Union. He referred to the armada that had attacked America in the East, saying that it, too, was activated by the same fascist ideology.

When Litvinov ended his speech, Roosevelt smiled. He was pleased. Now it was his turn to speak. He began by giving his opinion of the Soviet diplomat. He said it was a good thing in these tragic days, when mutual understanding and confidence between the Soviet Union and the United States was so critically necessary for the two countries and the future of mankind, that the Soviet government had seen fit to send as its representative to the United States a statesman who had already held high office in his own country.

Roosevelt went on to note that Litvinov was entering on his duties on a historic day—America would now also be fighting against Germany.

After the official ceremony, the President had a long talk with the Soviet diplomat. What interested him most was whether the Soviet Union expected Japan to go to war against it. Litvinov said Japan had nothing to gain from a war against the Soviet Union. Asked by the President how many divisions had been removed from the Eastern Front, the Soviet diplomat answered evasively. He asked whether the latest developments would affect the supplies the U.S. had promised the Soviet Union. Roosevelt said no.

The newspaper people were told there would be no release on Roosevelt's talk with the Soviet ambassador. When Litvinov was about to leave, Roosevelt said, "Max, why don't you come over tonight for a game of bridge, and bring your wife. Mrs. Roosevelt and I will be glad to have you."

Nine days after he had submitted his credentials, Litvinov would write to his son and daughter at home:

"I have lots of work, many visits to make, and many visitors to receive. No time to go for a walk or to relax. Terribly tired by evening, and can't get enough sleep. An ambassador in Washington has at least twice as much work as an ambassador in any other capital. Sometimes I think I took on a job that's too much for me at my age. Once I tried going to a concert on the invitation of Egon Petri, but after the first number I was summoned by the President, though I have been to see him four times."

But neither his age nor his health, undermined by almost a lifetime of continuous tension—nothing could stop Litvinov from putting all his heart into his job. He was a statesman again, helping to mobilise against Nazism a country that was itself largely to blame for letting Hitler do what he was doing in Europe. He, Litvinov, was urging that enormous land with its powerful resources and its motley, slow-moving Congress, its incredibly intricate political pattern, to put its back to the wheel on the side of the freedom-loving nations.

If Litvinov were told he was doing a heroic job, he would not have understood. He was simply doing *his* job, with no thought of rewards. For him that was usual. He had functioned that way all his life.

In early December the Russian War Relief, which was collecting aid for the Soviet Union and its Red Army, called a meeting in New York's Madison Square Garden. Litvinov flew in from Washington. The huge auditorium was filled to capacity. There was not even standing room. In front of the platform stood a guard of honour from the Women's Auxiliary Corps, handpicked, in uniforms designed by the best modellers.

Litvinov ascended the platform to thunderous applause. He walked up to the microphone. He had not spoken publicly for years. The last time was in Geneva. He began in English, off the cuff, in simple and clear sentences:

"My homeland, the Soviet Union, is locked in mortal struggle against the fascist hordes..."

He spoke of people suffering in Nazi-occupied Smolensk and in the Ukraine. He spoke of villages in Byelorussia that were being wiped off the face of the earth. He spoke of hungry and tormented children, of rape and destruction, and of Soviet soldiers standing up to Nazi tanks.

You could hear a pin drop in the enormous hall. Then someone wailed aloud. A woman from the first row ran up to the stage, unhooked a diamond necklace and flung it at Litvinov's feet. She was followed by others—they were contributing rings and bracelets. People crowded round the platform, offering cheques. A man cried out, "Here's my contribution", waving a cheque for 15,000 dollars. The pile of cheques grew. The WACs from the guard of honour handed them up to the platform. Madison Square Garden wept, wailed, and thundered.

Litvinov looked on quietly. Then he said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, what we need is a second front!"

Litvinov came to the United States at a time of trial for the Soviet Union. It was the 5th month since the Nazis had attacked Russia. Their

initial onslaught was costing it enormous losses in men and property.

The West was convinced the Soviet Union would soon go under. The day after the Wehrmacht had lunged into the USSR, Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote to the President:

"For the past thirty hours I have done little but reflect upon the German-Russian war and its effect upon our immediate policy. To clarify my own views I have spent today in conference with the Chief of Staff and the men in the War Plans Division of the General Staff. I am glad to say that I find substantial unanimity upon the fundamental policy which they think should be followed by us...

"First. Here is their estimate of controlling facts:

"1. Germany will be thoroughly occupied in beating Russia for a minimum of one month and a possible maximum of three months..."

Roosevelt's biographer, Robert E. Sherwood, who cited Stimson's memo in his book, writes that the immediate response of the isolationists to this news was one of exultation, for "now they were free to go berserk with the original Nazi party line that Hitler represented the only bulwark against Bolshevism".

A fortnight later, however, Joseph E. Davies, once ambassador to Moscow, wrote the following memorandum: "The resistance of the Russian Army has been more effective than was generally expected." But only a few people shared his view. Nor did they change their minds at the end of 1941. U.S. industrialists were sure Soviet resistance would break down any moment, and that it was therefore useless sending arms to Russia. Worse than useless, because the shipments would fall into Hitler's hands. Such was the mood of military men, but also in political quarters in Washington and New York, and at high level in the Department of State. Though Roosevelt had spoken in favour of urgent aid to Soviet Russia, he, too, believed at that point in making haste slowly.

The leading U.S. papers referred to a paradox that, as they put it, was imaginable only in Dostoyevsky's novels: Germany had attacked Soviet Russia. Japan had attacked the United States. But instead of prevailing on the Soviets to declare war on Japan, which was fighting America, America declared war on Germany, which was not fighting America.

The conclusion was that Soviet Russia must fight Japan or the United States would not lift its little finger to help Russia. This propaganda of the foes of the Soviet Union had a strongly negative effect on the average American, who did not care to grasp the substance of the matter. Still, the general public in the United States was friendly. Many mass organisations had come out in favour of immediate aid to the Soviet Union.

The crushing defeat suffered by the German armies at the approaches to Moscow in December 1941 eroded the myth of German invincibility. The Blitzkrieg was turning into a war of attrition, which led to Germany's inevitable defeat. Japan did not venture to join the war against the USSR. Resistance grew in the Nazi-occupied lands. The victory at Moscow had an enormous influence on the subsequent course of the Second World War, and on the policy of the Western powers.

On January 1, 1942, in Washington, Roosevelt, Churchill, Litvinov, and 23 ambassadors of other countries signed a Declaration with the commitment to cooperate militarily and economically, and to refrain from signing a separate peace or armistice with the enemy. The signatories called themselves the United Nations.

The Declaration was an inspiration for democrats all over the world. But the second front was still a long way off.

Watching the merry-go-round of U.S. life, Litvinov saw that the Americans were not conscious of any burdens of war even after Pearl Harbour. There were restrictions on gasoline and beef. No longer did all average Americans drive their cars to work. Neighbours took turns in driving each other. That settled the transport problem. The cut in beef supplies caused no hardships either. Besides, there were no restrictions on poultry and fish, and no rationing of other foods and commodities. Restaurants and cafeterias, and the many other little eateries, were all open.

Litvinov was irritated by the overly vigilant attention he was attracting, especially in the early months. The ever-present and importunate reporters followed him about wherever he went. They wrote at length about his habits, tastes, and traits of character. Litvinov refused to abandon his Russian tunic, and had two new ones made. The press immediately reported the event, and photographs of a tunic were published. Even the braces he bought did not escape attention: readers were told what kind he had picked and where he had bought them.

Litvinov wrote home to his daughter Tania:

"Despite the war, the press is interested in our every step. Once Mummy had chilblains, and limped. People began calling and giving advice. We had to be inoculated against smallpox. As a result, Mummy had a rash. The papers blew it up into a serious illness (though there's no rash any more). A strange land and strange people."

The press did, indeed, watch Litvinov very closely. A U.S. journalist, Milton C. Mayer, wrote no one would have thought on seeing Litvinov in the streets that he was the Soviet Ambassador to the



United States. No one would have thought he was the man who endured all the vicissitudes of fate and was one of the handful who were directing the giant United Nations war effort. Maxim Litvinov, Mayer wrote, looked rather like a businessman engrossed in his daily cares.

He wrote that Litvinov's job was to represent Stalin and to work out the grand strategy of the United Nations together with Roosevelt and Churchill. Among his big problems was that of obtaining arms for the Soviet Union. Litvinov, the writer added, was beyond question one of the busiest men in the fantastically busy American capital. The windows of Litvinov's study were the last to go dark at night.

A widely read American weekly, *This Week*, wrote in its issue of April 19, 1942, that Litvinov was the most revered person in official Washington and among the public at large.

Litvinov's popularity worked in one more most surprising way. Letters came to the Soviet Embassy from all over America, claiming their writers were relatives of the Soviet Ambassador. A Baltimore tradesman named Litvin was more insistent than most. The papers had carried Litvinov's photograph at the airfield. He wore a coat and white scarf. Litvin had a photograph of himself taken in a similar coat and scarf, and had it published in the *Baltimore Sun* with Litvinov's photograph next to it. In an interview, he said he was from Vinnitsa, Russia, where his name had been Litvinov, of which Litvin was an abbreviation he had adopted in the United States.

What the tradesman did not know was that Litvinov was the Party name of Russian revolutionary Max Wallach which had in due course become his adopted surname. They could not be related. But Litvin had had his bit of advertising.

The stream of "relatives" was so great, and the Baltimore tradesman so importunate, that the Soviet Embassy was compelled to send letters to private persons and newspaper offices saying Ambassador Litvinov had no relatives in the United States.

But people would not leave Litvinov alone. A Hollywood motion picture company wanted to make a film about him. Litvinov's reaction was negative, though not only filmmakers, but also politicians friendly to the Soviet Union insisted it was a good idea. They said it would promote Soviet popularity. Finally, Litvinov agreed. The actor who was to play him asked for permission to observe the Soviet ambassador at work. He spent a few days in Litvinov's study, then said Litvinov could not be impersonated. He sat motionlessly at his desk. His image was static, and no image was possible without movement.

To Litvinov's joy, the film company abandoned the project.

But it was impossible to get rid of sensation-mongers. *Life* magazine planned to devote an issue whole to "Ambassador Litvinov's Day". It negotiated with the Soviet Embassy's press attaché, wishing to record an entire day in the ambassador's life: breakfast, reading the mail, lunch, talks, receiving visitors, telephone conversations, and so on. The journal assured the press attaché its reporters and photographers would be careful not to interfere, and would immediately retire if so asked.

The press attaché was pleased. He believed the idea would contribute to the popularity of the Soviet Union in America. But when Litvinov heard of it, he disapproved.

"No, they'll follow me about and interfere with my work."

"You must admit, however, it's an attractive idea," the press attaché observed.

Litvinov looked at the young diplomat over the top of his spectacles, his eyes sparkling with laughter. Stretching out his words, he said, "Terr-rr-ibly att-tt-active."

The project was turned down. Not that Litvinov underestimated the mass media. He knew the enormous role they played in the United States. He spoke at meetings and conferences, and was quite willing to receive journalists.

Bourgeois writers were inclined to refer scornfully to Soviet foreign policy, especially in connection with what they called the Ribbentrop pact. They hoped Litvinov, who had fallen from grace in 1939, would speak negatively of Stalin's and Molotov's foreign policy. But Litvinov stood firm: at press conferences he would examine the prewar policy of Britain and France channelling the German threat in the direction of the Soviet Union.

Litvinov spoke frequently in Washington, but preferred New York and other industrial cities, where he could address the masses. At meetings, he would appear in a Russian tunic rather than the black diplomatic suit which he had had made to order for himself.

Americans were gaining respect for the Soviet Union and its army. Former Russians set up societies calling for a second front in France to ease the pressure on Russia. Thousands of them wrote to the Embassy, asking to be enrolled in the Red Army. A big part here was played by the newspaper *Russky Golos* and the journal *Soviet Russia Today*, put out by Jessica Smith, an old friend of Litvinov's.

From time to time, the Soviet Embassy held receptions. All kinds of people were invited. Millionaire Corliss Lemont was a frequent visitor, as were Joseph Davies, ex-ambassador to Moscow, Polar explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson, and Russian emigré Beloselsky-Belozersky, who headed the local Russian War Relief organisations. The

big map of the Soviet Union in the main hall, where the military attaché demonstrated the war situation, always attracted a crowd of guests who asked countless questions.

Foreign diplomats from countries of the anti-Hitler coalition were invariably present. Lord Halifax, British ambassador to the United States and Litvinov's old acquaintance, was also always there. The Soviet warning that Litvinov had once sounded in Geneva that the local fascist aggression in Spain would lead to a world war, had come true. Now, Britain was reaping the bitter fruits of its policy. All that Lord Halifax could now do was to thank the Red Army for its valiant stand.

People from Nazi-occupied countries asked Litvinov for news from the battlefields. They knew the future of their nation was being decided on the Eastern Front.

In his conversations with foreign diplomats and at press conferences Litvinov would often say seemingly trivial things which, however, gave to understand that Moscow was certain of victory.

"The Bolshoi Theatre is presenting *Traviata* today, you know," he would say, "and the Stanislavsky Theatre is presenting *Straussiana*."

At that time, the Germans were within a stone's throw of Mzhaisk.

Three months after his arrival in the United States, Litvinov received a request from Yemelyan Yaroslavsky to send him rhododendron seeds. Litvinov told the press about it, and let the reporters draw their own conclusions.

Litvinov saw his central diplomatic and political task in prevailing on the United States to promptly open the second front. On January 20, 1942, he wrote to the Foreign Commissariat: "Judging by the war situation, we will manage to push the Germans back a little along the entire front, but they are continuing to resist stubbornly. According to available information, they are scraping the bottom of the barrel in the occupied countries to send reinforcements to the Soviet front... Should we not therefore raise the question of direct military aid squarely and press for a second front on the European continent?"

Molotov's reply came on February 4:

"We would welcome a second front in Europe by our Allies. But surely you are aware that our call for a second front has been turned down three times, and we do not want a fourth refusal. Do not therefore speak of a second front with Roosevelt yet. Let us wait until, perhaps, the Allies raise the question with us."

It was clear to Litvinov that America had decided to make haste slowly. On February 13, during a breakfast eye to eye with Roose-

velt, the latter asked the Soviet diplomat's opinion about the prevailing situation. Litvinov replied:

"Mr. President, I have no instructions from my government and make no proposals whatsoever, but, if you wish, I'll tell you what I think. Soon, the course of events will leave us no choice. Since Singapore and the Dutch East Indies have been lost, no bases are left in the Pacific for an attack on Japan. That front will therefore remain passive. The only front available for active operations is the European. America and Britain will not be able to get at Japan until they destroy Hitler."

Roosevelt acquiesced, his tired eyes fixed on Litvinov's face. He said, however, that a landing in Western Europe was much too difficult an undertaking. Besides, he said, it would be hard to transport reinforcements. And furthermore, the fighting capacity of the British was none too high.

Acting on his government's instructions Litvinov worked perseveringly for more military aid from America.

In one of his first talks with Roosevelt and other U.S. statesmen, Litvinov set forth the Soviet view on military and political problems. Some time later, at a conference in Philadelphia of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, he elucidated the Soviet viewpoint to a broader segment of the American public.

*Time* magazine said of the Soviet position, as described by its Ambassador, that it meant no Far Eastern front against Japan should be opened, and the main blow should be directed against Hitler. The German troops, it said citing Litvinov, had gone too far into the heart of Russia, and would not escape destruction. The Russians would fight to the end, until Hitler was totally broken. Hitler was international public enemy number one. And his fall would also be the fall of the other international gangsters—Japan, Italy, and their various satellites. This, *Time* magazine said, led to the conclusion that the Allies should concentrate on crushing Hitler.

But America's industrialists were in no hurry. They waited for further developments. If the Soviet Union fell, America would still be safe with the Atlantic Ocean between it and the enemy. There was no point, therefore, to irritate Hitler. This was also the viewpoint of the politicians and the military. Roosevelt had his hands full to set the enormous and intricate business world into motion. But he was doing it.

A strange situation arose. The President was surrounded by a multitude of diplomats representing capitalist countries. Litvinov was the ambassador of a socialist state. Yet it was with Litvinov that Roosevelt had cordial and friendly relations. Shocked by this relationship



between the president of the most powerful capitalist state and the Soviet diplomat who was a Communist, bourgeois historians were incapable of reaching down to its sources. They wrote of it as of a riddle. Yet there was no riddle. There was the intellect of a revolutionary faithful to an idea of enormous power. There was a man who represented with dignity a world that was foreign to Roosevelt, but a man who made people respect him. And there were the contacts they had had in the late autumn of 1933, which now grew into a dependable workmanlike relationship cemented by mutual respect. In those difficult times, when contending against fellow-countrymen who opposed him, Roosevelt found support in Litvinov, in Litvinov's confidence that the Nazis would be beaten for sure. Besides, the activity of the Soviet Embassy and the man in charge of it helped mould the kind of public opinion in the country that Roosevelt needed to carry forward his policy.

The isolationists had not put down their arms. They resisted America's war effort. The anti-Soviet forces in the country were behind them. One such force was *Rossiia*, a rabidly reactionary Russian-language emigré paper, which called for rupturing relations with the Soviet Union.

It was essential to bring home to Americans that, despite the defeat in the Battle of Moscow, the Germans were still very strong, and the war would be long and hard.

On February 26, 1942, Litvinov went to New York to address American and foreign newsmen at the Overseas Press Club. The place was crowded. Businessmen and public leaders had come too, aside from journalists. The Soviet Ambassador outlined the immediate tasks facing the countries of the anti-Hitler coalition, and stressed the decisive importance of the Soviet-German front. He said that according to information he had received from Moscow, Hitler was massing forces for a spring offensive in a bid to make up for his defeat in the Battle of Moscow. "We should like," Litvinov said, "all the forces of the Allies to be put into action by then, and that by then there should be no idle armies, immobile navies, and stationary air fleets. This applies also to military materials, which should be sent to the places where they are most needed."

In spring 1942, Litvinov sent all the Embassy people who spoke English to various American cities. They addressed mass meetings in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and other major industrial and cultural centres. This kept Americans informed of the events on the Soviet-German front. Besides, considerable sums of money were collected. To his daughter in Moscow, Litvinov wrote: "Public speaking is one of the duties of an ambassador. Meetings in

various cities are organised here frequently by the friendly local Russian War Relief organisations, at which large sums of money are collected. Once, Mummy went to a meeting instead of me, and was a big success. As much as 25,000 dollars were contributed."

Quite unexpected situations occurred at meetings sometimes. Litvinov's secretary, Petrova, once spoke at Wellesley College, an establishment for wealthy American girls. Petrova had been asked to speak on women's role in the war. Not until after she had ascended the platform, did the chairlady say the girls were expecting her to speak about the importance of faith. Ladies in mink coats looked with undisguised curiosity at the slim, modestly dressed woman, waiting to see how she would cope. Anastasia Petrova was unabashed. She said that, indeed, she would speak of the faith Soviet women had in beating the Nazis. She spoke of what Soviet women were doing for the war, and how faith in victory helped them cope with incredible hardships. She spoke of young girls and women at the front and in the enemy's rear, of schoolgirls, half hungry and short of sleep, working in factories. The ladies were impressed, and applauded loudly.

In April 1942, Litvinov, who was concurrently minister to Cuba, arrived in Havana with the Embassy Attaché Alexei Fyodorov. He saw the Cubans had deep sympathy for the USSR and its just war against fascism. Batista, who had a burning hatred for the Soviet Union, was forced to consider this and rendered the Soviet diplomat every possible courtesy. Litvinov was received with much fanfare. The military school held a parade in his honour, and receptions were called.

Litvinov got to know Juan Marinello, president of the People's Socialist Party of Cuba, who let Litvinov have the use of a motorcar to tour the country. Litvinov visited factories in the suburbs of Havana and spoke to their workers. On one of his trips, Litvinov met Spaniards who had lived in the Soviet Union after the fall of the Republican government, and had then moved to Cuba.

At the beginning of April 1942, Roosevelt sent Stalin a personal message, saying he had important military proposals concerning the use of Allied armed forces to ease the critical situation on the Soviet-German front, and suggested someone should come to Washington to discuss the matter. Moscow sent Molotov, who was to negotiate with the President together with Litvinov. Meanwhile, Litvinov was instructed to find out what specific questions Roosevelt would raise.

The President received Litvinov at once, as usual, and said he thought it would be a good idea to open a second front in Europe and not some place else. He and his advisers were opting for a landing in Northern France, but the British were against it. To spare his allies

embarrassment, the President worded it thus: The plan has not yet been approved by Britain. He wanted the Soviet Government to help him, as he put it, and back up his plan.

Litvinov immediately informed Moscow of his talk with Roosevelt. The answer he received on April 20 said the Soviet government would send its representatives to Washington at once to exchange opinions concerning a second front in Europe.

Litvinov passed on the message to Roosevelt. This time, however, the President was less optimistic. And the reasons were immediately clear. The English, he said to Litvinov, want to put off the second front until 1943. "I've sent Marshall and Hopkins to London to insist on 1942," he added.

"Mr. President, do you think we can do anything to overcome British resistance?" Litvinov asked. "I'm sure General Marshall and Mr. Hopkins will do all they can. But perhaps we, too, can do something."

The President said he was aware that Litvinov knew the English well, for hadn't he lived in Britain for ten years. They should work together, therefore. "Suppose the Soviet representatives go to London after the Washington talks and apply some pressure on Churchill on my behalf and on behalf of the Soviet Union?" he said.

Roosevelt had good cause to fear Churchill's resistance. On March 9, he had cabled Churchill he was increasingly interested in setting up a new front that summer. Churchill evaded an answer. Now new negotiations were about to begin.

After preliminary talks in London with Churchill and Eden, Molotov arrived in Washington on May 29, 1942.

Litvinov awaited Molotov's arrival without enthusiasm. To his mind, Molotov was not flexible enough as a diplomat. Once, long ago, Molotov had been a different person. In 1920 he had come to a session of the Central Executive Committee from Nizhny Novgorod (now Gorky), where he was chairman of the gubernia executive committee. He had with him a bundle of little books—his own poetry published in Nizhny Novgorod, which he asked a girl from the Secretariat to distribute among the delegates. During intervals, he walked in the corridors and the lobby, smiling timidly and looking round to see if anybody was reading them. But many years had passed since then.

The American side had kept its word concerning secrecy: the papers had nothing about Molotov's arrival. Not until Molotov was leaving did his photograph appear in the press: Molotov beside the plane; Litvinov at his side, and on the other side General George C. Marshall,

U.S. Army Chief of Staff, Secretary of State Cordell Hull, and Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations.

The talks opened on the day of Molotov's arrival in the Oval Room at the White House. There were military men on the American side, including Eisenhower. He was still an obscure general at the time. In his first report of the talks to Moscow, Litvinov wrote indeed that a General Eisenhower had also been present with the other American brass. Admiral Leahy, lean, above medium height, dressed as always in a naval uniform, was particularly active. Those who wanted the talks to founder had a vigorous leader in him.

Roosevelt's biographer, Robert E. Sherwood, described the opening of the talks as follows:

"Molotov arrived at the White House about four o'clock in the afternoon of Friday, May 29. He then met with the President, Hull, Hopkins, Ambassador Litvinov and two interpreters, Pavlov and Cross, the latter Professor of Slavic Languages and Literature at Harvard University. The record of this first meeting as written by Cross, is as follows:

"After the customary introductions and greetings, Mr. Molotov presented Mr. Stalin's good wishes, which the President heartily reciprocated. To the President's inquiry as to Mr. Stalin's health Mr. Molotov replied that, though his Chief had an exceptionally strong constitution, the events of the winter and spring had put him under heavy strain...

"Mr. Molotov expressed his intention to discuss the military situation fully. He had covered it in detail with Mr. Churchill, who had not felt able to give any definite answer to the questions Mr. Molotov raised, but had suggested that Mr. Molotov should return through London after his conversations with the President, at which time a more concrete reply could be rendered in the light of the Washington discussions...

"The President remarked that he had one or two points to raise which had been brought up by the State Department, and could be discussed by Mr. Molotov or between Mr. Litvinov and Secretary Hull as seemed expedient...

"The President described his plans for continuing the conversations and for receiving Mr. Molotov's staff and the flyers who brought him over. Mr. Molotov decided to spend Friday night at the White House, and ostensibly withdrew to rest, though between adjournment and dinner he took a walk with Mr. Litvinov whom it had been decided not to include in the next day's conversations, to the Ambassador's obvious annoyance."

Harry Hopkins, one of President Roosevelt's closest aides, made a



personal record of the same meeting. It closed with the following words: "The conference seemed to be getting nowhere rapidly and I suggested that Molotov might like to rest. Litvinov acted extremely bored and cynical throughout the conference. He made every effort to get Molotov to stay at Blair House... But Molotov obviously wanted to stay at the White House at least one night...."

On the following day, May 30, the talks were continued. Molotov asked the President squarely if the United States and Britain would be able to draw 40 German divisions away from the Eastern Front. If they were, did the President think Hitler would be beaten in 1942 or at the latest in 1943? If not, the Soviet Union would continue to fight Hitler alone. The Soviet government would like to know if the United States could do anything to ease the burden of the Soviet Union, considering that the difficulties of opening a second front would be more numerous in 1943 than they were now.

While stressing their wish to open the second front in 1942, the Americans referred to various difficulties. Molotov did not get a direct reply.

In his talks with foreign diplomats, Molotov never departed from the strictly official approach. This was also true of his talks with Roosevelt. Sherwood wrote:

"There was also the fact that in all of Roosevelt's manifold dealings with all kinds of people, he had never before encountered anyone like Molotov. His relationship with the Kremlin from 1933 to 1939 had been through Litvinov who, although qualifying as an old Bolshevik, had a Western kind of mind and an understanding of the ways of the world that Roosevelt knew."

Roosevelt instantly observed the difference between the dry and officious Molotov and Litvinov, who had a knack of finding contact at once with Western diplomats. Nor did Molotov's attitude towards Litvinov escape him.

The talks with Roosevelt proceeded in a tense atmosphere, as recorded by interpreter Vladimir Pavlov: "The statements were dry and laconic. Roosevelt was very amiable. It was clear, however, that he was under pressure of the reactionary forces. Admiral Leahy acted at odds with him. At later meetings, Leahy did not appear. This meant Hopkins's influence had taken precedence. At the end of the talks, Roosevelt told Molotov to let Stalin know that he, Roosevelt, hoped the second front would open that year."

Despite Molotov's intentions to negotiate without Litvinov, the latter did take part in the talks. The President's interpreter, Samuel H. Gross, recorded: "Mr. Molotov was much more gruff and assertive

than in the previous interviews, perhaps for the purpose of playing the big shot in Mr. Litvinov's presence."

The moment he arrived in the United States, Molotov chose to be inimical and terse with Litvinov. During a discussion, Litvinov wanted some of his staff to come. He asked Attaché Anton Fedotov to go and invite them. Molotov cut him short: "Not invite—summon."

Litvinov made no answer.

The talks were coming to a close. During a luncheon at the Soviet Embassy, Molotov and Litvinov pressed Roosevelt and Hopkins for an answer to the four requests they said had been submitted to Roosevelt, namely, sending a caravan of ships monthly directly to Arkhangelsk under escort of U.S. naval ships; monthly delivery of 50 B-25 bombers; delivery of 150 Boston-3 bombers, and delivery of 3,000 trucks monthly to Persian Gulf ports.

Molotov flew to London, where the talks were continued. As a result, an understanding was reached by the USSR, the USA, and Britain "concerning urgent questions related to opening the second front in Europe in 1942".

Roosevelt and Hopkins, we learn from Sherwood, thought the talks had been positive. They acknowledged the creditable stand of the Soviet Union and its heroic Red Army.

The first Washington summer had been hard for Litvinov. The heat was all but unbearable. People who could afford it, left the city for cooler places. Litvinov was too busy to go anywhere. He wrote his son, who was by then a Red Army lieutenant: "We couldn't go out of town, and are simply drooping from the heat and humidity. Our underclothes stick to our bodies. We have air-conditioning in the bedroom, but it lowers the temperature by only 3 or 4 degrees. On average, it is 27-30 degrees Centigrade indoors, and 30-33 outside. I take a bath several times a day, and walk about undressed. The humidity is worst of all."

Hard work went on from morning to night. Litvinov met and spoke to diplomats, instructed his staff, appeared at public meetings. An endless stream of coded telegrams came from Moscow, asking for data and reports, and giving instructions. Litvinov's replies were as curt as he could make them: Have seen the President today. I said this, he said that; also had a talk with the Secretary of State. The situation is as follows. Not a word wasted. No promises, no groundless hopes. A sober situation report, a recommendation here and there, and just one continuous request: "Inform me and my staff more often and more thoroughly about the situation at the fighting front. We must know what to say to Americans."

Moscow was displeased with Litvinov's dry, laconic messages. He

knew it. But he had no intention of changing his style. He had no intention to present things in a rosy light. The truth and nothing but the truth...

During the daytime, when the heat was at its peak, Litvinov's heart condition let itself be felt. He went up to his room on the first floor of the embassy building for a short rest. In the evenings, when he had a few leisure moments, he would listen to music. Of Dmitry Shostakovich's latest opus he wrote to his son: "Have just listened to the first radio performance in the USA of Shostakovich's Seventh Symphony conducted by Stokowski... Usually, it is hard to understand and appreciate a symphony the first time you hear it. Yet in this case you felt its grandeur at once. An inforgettable impression. The select audience (it was not a public concert), applauded. The applause seemed never to end. I'm going to go to the first public performance by conductor Koussevitski..."

The understanding that the second front would be opened in 1942 did not mean the matter was settled. The Soviet government, and Litvinov as its representative in Washington, took a wholly realistic view of what Roosevelt could and could not achieve. They were aware of the resistance in political, business, and military quarters, and of the President's own attitude, based above all on the interests of the United States and those of his, capitalist, class. Litvinov was of the opinion America and Britain would not open the second front until they felt the Soviet Union could defeat Hitler Germany on its own. Then they would go into action, because crossing the finish line with no political trumps would hurt their prestige in the eyes of the world which yearned for an early victory.

Developments bore this out. In August 1942, Churchill came to Moscow to coordinate further action with Stalin. The communique pointed out that a number of decisions had been taken. Both governments were determined to fight on with all strength and energy until Hitlerism was wiped out.

Conducted in a cordial and outspoken spirit, the talks were evidence of the close cooperation and mutual understanding that prevailed between the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and the United States.

In fact, however, the Big Three relationship was not as cloudless as the communique said. The communique had, indeed, been drawn up after long and difficult discussions. Churchill had brought a memorandum saying it was quite impossible to open the second front. Stalin was vexed and disappointed.

The atmosphere at the official lunch for the British visitor was glum. There was every evidence that the talks had broken down.

Stalin made a short speech. It was unexpected, and no stenographer was present. But some of the guests memorised it:

"Don't be afraid of the Germans. The devil isn't as tough as he looks. Sometimes battles are lost owing to poor reconnaissance. Let me recall an episode from the First World War. In the Dardanelles, where the British faced the Turks, both sides were poised for a battle. At the last moment, Turkish reconnaissance discovered that the British intended to withdraw. The Turkish command had been planning to do the same. Learning of the British intention, it changed its mind. So the British left the field to the Turks."\*

What Stalin did not say was that Churchill had been in charge of the British Navy at the time. Churchill turned livid. He averted his eyes. British Ambassador Stafford Cripps rose to speak as required by protocol. Churchill, however, tugged at the hem of Cripps's jacket and mumbled angrily, "No more speeches."

The lunch was a total failure. When everybody rose to leave, Stalin came up to Churchill and invited him for a talk: "We haven't come to terms, but please come and see me."

Churchill paused morosely, then said he would come. Stalin, Churchill, and interpreter Pavlov went down to Stalin's quarters. Their conversation lasted for nearly six hours. The aforesaid communique was the result.

"Close cooperation and mutual understanding" was a formula Churchill had accepted. But it did not mean the second front would be opened in 1942. The Red Army fought on singlehanded. After the Germans were beaten at Moscow, Roosevelt told Litvinov of the U.S. plan in the war against Germany. The president spoke of stepping up the war effort industrially and of gathering strength. Roosevelt's military advisers had suggested a modest landing in France in 1942, with the second front being opened in 1943. But that could be done only in a frontal offensive. That was the substance of America's English Channel strategy. Later, U.S. historians would claim that the United States had argued for the earliest possible invasion of Western Europe. But an Anglo-American meeting in London in July 1942 substituted a 1942 landing in Northern Africa, so-called Operation Torch, for a landing in Northern France.

Litvinov, who had an opportunity to look behind the scenes of U.S. politics, assumed that the change was due to America's reluctance to strain relations with Britain and, in particular, with Churchill, who was nursing the idea of hitting Germany in the Bal-

\* This record was supplied by Vladimir Pavlov, Stalin's interpreter.



kans, which he described as Europe's soft underbelly. With the Germans badly beaten in Africa, Churchill's plan had every chance of success, and would in future enable Britain to follow its traditional policy in the Balkans and the Middle East. Roosevelt accepted Operation Torch in the belief that its success would bring closer the second front in Europe.

In the circumstances, Litvinov concentrated on obtaining the earliest delivery to the Soviet Union of arms, food, and medical supplies. He also applied himself diligently to arousing public opinion in favour of an early opening of the second front.

The events in the summer of 1942 called for energetic action. The Wehrmacht was out to capture Stalingrad, imperilling the oil-rich Caucasus and the fertile Kuban and Stavropol plains. Hitler's Directive No. 45 of July 23, 1942, required Army Group A to thrust into the Western Caucasus, move along the Black Sea shore, capture Maikop and Grozny, cut the mountain passes in the Central Caucasus, and break through to Baku. Army Group B was to hit Stalingrad, crush the Soviet armies there, capture the city, cut across the land between the Don and the Volga, and blockade shipping along the Volga. The Nazi armies would then advance along the Volga to Astrakhan and gain control of the whole area.

In those exceedingly anxious days, Litvinov and his team knew no rest. They travelled all over the country, speaking at meetings and contacting new groups and political leaders.

The Russian War Relief usually leased a hotel for two or three hours for Litvinov's public appearances. The entrance fee was three dollars. Often he spoke at Madison Square Garden and in other large auditoriums. The proceeds covered expenses and bought additional food and medical supplies for shipment to the Soviet Union.

Litvinov's contacts with Roosevelt grew closer. They also became more purposeful, for now they concerned aid in arms and materiel, food, and medical supplies, whose importance kept increasing as the Germans stepped up their summer offensive on the Soviet-German front.

Again, Litvinov's diplomatic experience and prestige stood him in good stead. The Soviet Ambassador could phone the White House at any time, and the President would receive him at once.

What they had were not simply conversations, but discussions between two statesmen who knew each other's worth.

Often, Roosevelt would invite the Soviet diplomat to drop in in the evening. They spoke eye to eye. With no one else present. Without advisers. Without interpreters. The only other living creature in the room was the President's pet dog, Fala. The conversation between

the refined millionaire and the former agent of Lenin's *Iskra* ran along familiar lines. The Soviet Union desperately needed more arms to defend itself against the Nazis. And Litvinov kept bringing it home to the President that more arms should be supplied.

Within half a year of Litvinov's arrival in Washington, the Soviet government's considered policy, and the talks in Moscow and Washington, yielded palpable results. Roosevelt ventured on a step that Litvinov had shown him to be necessary: the United States extended the lend-lease aid plan to cover the Soviet Union. Here is what Anastas Mikoyan told me on this score:

"Litvinov played a most important wartime role as ambassador to the United States. I was negotiating lend-lease with America. The American negotiators were led by Averell Harriman, and the British by Lord Beaverbrook. I must say it was easier talking to the British. But the negotiations dragged out all the same. Once Beaverbrook asked me why I looked so glum. I said the talks were leading nowhere and I was in no smiling mood. The partners were fencing all the time, and setting new conditions. Meanwhile I had not been authorised to alter anything in the original scenario. In the circumstances, Litvinov managed to find the right approach. He conducted the talks in Washington with eminent success, securing deliveries of arms and other goods. It was Litvinov's personality that tilted the scales. He played a very big part. People in the United States liked him. He had a knack of influencing Americans, of influencing U.S. statesmen."

On June 11, 1942, Litvinov and Hull signed an agreement on the principles governing mutual wartime aid. The U.S. government said it would continue to render the Soviet Union aid in arms and other war materiel.

Still to be settled was the question of the Soviet-American commercial treaty signed in 1937 and renewed annually. A longer-term instrument was now required. On July 31, Litvinov and Hull signed such an accord, effective until August 6, 1943, with the American side accepting the Soviet proposal that if the agreement should not be replaced by a broader treaty, it would remain in force after August 6.

When the German armies broke through to Stalingrad, a protocol was urgently needed on military deliveries under the already existing official agreements. Such a document would state the specific time of delivery. Litvinov negotiated with Sumner Welles, the Undersecretary of State, and British Ambassador Campbell. On October 6, they signed the desired protocol.

Caravans of ships carrying aircraft, tanks, guns, military equipment, and strategic raw materials, left American ports for the Soviet Union in larger and larger numbers.

Though the lend-lease deliveries amounted to just 4 per cent of Soviet wartime industrial output, they played a definitely positive role in the Soviet Union's war against the Nazi invaders.

Unfortunately, there were breakdowns in the flow of aid, or artificial cutbacks. In September 1942, for example, Churchill had 154 Air Cobras removed from an American caravan going to Murmansk. Moscow got to know about it. Stalin cabled Litvinov, asking him to get in touch with Roosevelt at once and prevent such things from happening in future.

Enemies of the Soviet Union complained that the White House had become a branch of the Soviet Embassy. The press attacks on Litvinov multiplied. Nazi agents in the United States fixed their attention on him. Malicious cartoons and slander appeared in the papers. They recalled Litvinov's revolutionary past and his gun-running days. All sorts of things were done to discredit him in the eyes of the average American. One night in a Washington street an unknown woman started screaming at Litvinov. She cried that he would be the undoing of America. A crowd gathered. A public scandal seemed inevitable. Litvinov observed calmly:

"The lady speaks with a strong German accent."

And the "lady" took to her heels.

The German offensive on the Soviet front sparked a campaign to cut aid to the Soviets. Sceptical articles appeared in the papers saying the Soviet Union was on the brink of collapse and that, in general, its collapse was inevitable. Isolationists yelled that all aid to Russia was in vain, and too costly for the American taxpayer. If Russia were crushed, they said, America could not care less. With the Germans on the other side of the Atlantic, America would surely come to terms with them.

Litvinov toured the American cities all through the autumn of 1942 regardless of his age and health. On September 11, he wrote to his wife, who was in New York, where she, too, had spoken at a public meeting:

"I have just received an invitation to dinner from Mr. and Mrs. Hull. I said you would not be back in time, and turned it down... My cold is better, and I feel fit. Lots of letters and telegrams have piled up in my absence... Hardly slept the past two nights—no time for sleep."

At his public appearances people asked questions about the state of the fighting, wished the Red Army success, and gave him souvenirs for Soviet soldiers.

Litvinov asked Moscow to send him a girl who had distinguished herself in the fighting. The public would be thrilled to see someone

from the frontlines. In October 1942, Ludmilla Pavlichenko, a sniper, arrived and made a sensation. Twenty-six years old, a Red Army lieutenant, Ludmilla had made the Germans pay for the lives of her husband and child, for her country's suffering. Her pictures were printed in the papers. Initially, she appeared in public dressed in her military uniform. This made a tremendous impression. Then, one day, she came to an Aid to Russia symphony concert in an elegant dress accompanied by Leopold Stokowski and Ivy Litvinova. The audience rose and applauded.

Litvinov asked the girl to go to California, where sympathy for the Soviet Union ran especially high. At a mass meeting in Los Angeles, Ludmilla Pavlichenko thanked America for its aid to her country. But, she said, this was not enough: it was essential to open a second front.

On her return from California, she was received with pomp at the Soviet Embassy in Washington. Litvinov came out to meet her in full uniform, and behind him stood members of the embassy staff. In his hands, Litvinov held a silver tray with an envelope. Embarrassed by all the ceremony, Pavlichenko approached slowly. Litvinov took a few steps in her direction, and gave her the envelope. It was a letter from a California millionaire who proposed marriage. Litvinov said that in his capacity it was his duty to inform her of it officially.

The funny little ceremony caused a lot of merriment. Soon, Pavlichenko went home to Russia. The California millionaire waited in vain for a reply to his proposal.

In the autumn of 1942, the Nazis came close to Stalingrad. It was clear to everyone that, in effect, the outcome of the war hung in the balance. The American papers printed both the Soviet and the German war reports. The difference between them was great, and Americans were confused. The Soviet Embassy went out of its way to supply detailed information to the press.

The gravity of the situation forced Litvinov to think of how things would go if Stalingrad fell. In a strictly confidential talk with Roosevelt, Litvinov admitted that if this were to occur, it would greatly lengthen the war. The Soviet Union, he said, would not surrender in any circumstances. It would fight on until victory. But the position of some of Germany's allies should not be forgotten. And the situation of the United States, too. It would be far worse off. So it was absolutely essential to draw Nazi divisions away from the Eastern front, and, besides, step up arms deliveries.

Somehow, the content of the talk was leaked to the press, though it is true, in a distorted way. Litvinov instructed Vladimir Pastoyev,



the press attaché, to find out who was guilty. The answer was not hard to get at: the United Press had sent out articles on the Stalingrad situation, and, on learning that Litvinov was to visit Roosevelt that day, surmised that they would talk of the possible consequences of the Stalingrad Battle. The UP writer ascribed his own conclusions to Litvinov.

Celebrations of the 25th anniversary of the October Revolution gave Litvinov an opportunity to again focus public attention on the Soviet-German front. On the suggestion of President Roosevelt and New York Mayor La Guardia, November 8, 1942 was marked in America as Stalingrad Day. A congress of American-Soviet friendship was held in Madison Square Garden. Labour leaders, writers and scientists, industrialists and leaders of the women's movement, attended. Roosevelt could not come but sent a message of greeting. Vice-President Henry Wallace and others addressed the gathering. All speakers referred to the grand exploit of the Red Army and the Soviet people. When Litvinov rose to speak, the applause was thunderous. He said the anti-Hitler coalition needed consolidating, and that the Americans' words of support and admiration "would reach the hearts of the Red Army men fighting amid the ruins of Stalingrad, and elsewhere. They would evoke a heartfelt response among all Soviet people who were contending with incredible difficulties in the name of freedom".

Sympathy for the Soviet Union mounted not only in the United States but also in other countries of the Western hemisphere. In June 1942, Canada established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. At the height of the German offensive at Stalingrad, Mexico restored diplomatic relations with the USSR. The matter was negotiated with the Mexican ambassador in the United States. In 1943, diplomatic relations were also restored with Uruguay. All this spoke of the increasing prestige of the Soviet Union. People all over the world acknowledged the tremendous service it was doing to humanity.

The turning point in the Battle of Stalingrad came in November and December of 1942. The Red Army enveloped, and began to grind down the armies of Marshal Paulus. Throughout those months, the Soviet Embassy telephones rang all day long. Hundreds of letters and cables arrived. Americans were asking for the latest news and wishing the Soviets an early victory. Finally, in the early hours of February 1, 1943, America's radio stations broadcast a Soviet Informbureau communicate about the final and complete defeat of the Germans at Stalingrad.

The papers were full of articles and commentaries, and of photo-

graphs of Soviet generals and the ruins of Stalingrad—and also of the captured German generals. The *Washington Star* wrote the Stalingrad Battle had been one of the greatest battles in history. It said the Russians had shown that enormous obstacles could be overcome by straining one's will. "Stalingrad," it wrote, "was a still greater debacle for the Germans than Verdun had been in the previous world war."

Solidarity meetings were held all over the United States. Albert Einstein, Ernest Hemingway, Polar explorer Admiral Byrd, and many other prominent personalities, spoke at these meetings. Theodore Dreiser sent a message thanking the people of Russia for their gallant effort in behalf of all humanity and their social achievements.

The President of the United States, too, saw fit to applaud the exploit of the Soviet armies. "Their glorious victory," he wrote, "has halted the invasion and became the turning point in the war of the Allied nations against aggression."

There was one more response worth mentioning. It came from Alexander Kerensky. By that time, he, former head of the Provisional Government in Russia, had already spent a quarter of a century as a political emigré in the United States. His former predictions of the inevitable collapse of the Bolsheviks had long since been disproved. Now, this inveterate enemy of the Soviet Union, who had escaped from revolutionary Petrograd dressed in women's clothes, impressed by the courage of the Soviet army, wanted to express his belated admiration to the Soviet Ambassador. Kerensky asked to be received by Litvinov.

Litvinov read his letter, held it in his hands then dropped it on the desk. He walked up and down his office, thinking. Possibly, he recalled the distant summer of 1918 in London, and the meeting at which Kerensky slandered Lenin and the Bolsheviks. He had come to London then to obtain military assistance from the Entente, and destroy the Soviets with its help.

Litvinov told the staff to leave Kerensky's letter unanswered.

The Soviet Ambassador saw sympathy rise for his country. Speaking at public meetings, he now began stressing the need for enduring and lasting peace once the war was over. Again and again, he said to Roosevelt that the Soviet Union and the United States bore a special responsibility for the maintenance of peace.

In early April 1943, Litvinov was summoned to Moscow. Reports of his departure appeared in the American press. Litvinov replied curtly to reporters that he was being summoned by his government, and that his wife was staying on in Washington.

He decided not to delay his departure, and drew up the requisite

instructions for the embassy staff to follow in his absence. He called up Roosevelt and said he was leaving in a few days. Naturally, the President knew. He was simply waiting to hear of it from Litvinov.

On the eve of his departure, Litvinov went to see Roosevelt. They were alone—two ageing men with long and eventful lives behind them. Roosevelt asked after a long pause:

"You won't be coming back?"

Litvinov shrugged. He spoke of arms deliveries and of the second front. He no longer doubted that the second front would soon be opened. He said it was time to think of the future...

Thus, quite abruptly, Litvinov's highly beneficial activity in the United States was cut short. He had shown enormous energy and intelligence. Surely, he could still have done a lot of good at his post.

After Rommel's crushing defeat, one could fly home to Russia via Africa. All those flying to Africa, had to have injections against the plague, cholera, and other contagious diseases. Litvinov went for his injections to the special medical centre at the War Department. The austere pentagonal building made a depressing impression on him. The doctor examined Litvinov carefully, and said he would not let him fly. Litvinov was then 67, the planes were not what they are now, and the long flight across the ocean and the Sahara could affect his health. Litvinov insisted, however, and the injections were made.

Then one more hindrance arose. Petrova was to fly to Moscow with her boss. But the pilots refused to take a woman aboard: it was a bad omen. Finally, the authorities agreed to issue papers saying the Soviet Ambassador was accompanied by his secretary. The secretary, after all, could be male.

From Washington, they flew in a civil aircraft to Miami. From there a military transport took off for Teheran.

During the flight, which lasted 12 days and nights, Litvinov had a glimpse of life at American and British garrisons scattered over the vast distance from Miami to Baghdad. His impressions were diverse and instructive.

The Allies had seen to it that their garrisons should live in comfort. The barracks were protected against mosquitoes, and every two men had a room. The food served to soldiers and officers was as good as at top-rate restaurants. On his menu, Litvinov wrote sarcastically: "Oh, poor American soldiers!" Yes, they knew nothing of trenches, of freezing weather, and meagre rations.

Several million men and officers, equipped with first-class arms, were quartered on the British Isles, waiting for action. In the mean-

while, along a front of 3,000 kilometres from Murmansk to the Caucasus, the Red Army was locked in battle with the Nazis.

During his stopovers at garrisons in Africa, Litvinov spoke to the men of the situation on the Soviet-German front, of the hardships suffered by the Soviet people, of the exploits of Red Army soldiers and officers. And, as usual, he ended his speeches with an appeal to open the second front promptly. Nor did Litvinov ever fail to stress that the main thing after Hitler was crushed would be to establish lasting peace.

In Teheran, Litvinov changed to a Soviet plane and flew to Baku. At once, he felt the effects of the war. The blacked-out city was ready to repulse Nazi air-raids. Litvinov wanted to fly to Moscow, but was told to wait until dark, so as to avoid Nazi raiders.

He arrived in Moscow in the morning. His daughter Tania was waiting for him at the airfield.

Litvinov did not know what to expect. He was aware, of course, that he had long since reached retirement age. But he could not picture himself out of work. The two years of his fall from grace, when he had no job, were the most trying period in his life. He had worked like all the others of like mind and frame, without a thought for his health and age.

Back in 1939, when work records were started for all citizens, Litvinov's secretariat had asked the personnel department to draw up the Foreign Commissar's record as well. A man from the personnel department came to ask Litvinov when he had begun working, when and where he had had jobs, and so on. Litvinov was surprised:

"I don't need a work record," he said vexedly, "I am working, am I not? And if I will be out of work, the Central Committee will find something for me."

He simply could not picture a Bolshevik going off the stage. The experience he had gathered over the decades, could be useful, even necessary.

With this in mind, he had come home. After nearly two years of fighting the Nazis, at the price of incredible suffering, his country had attained a point from where the outlines of victory were already visible. But Litvinov knew a lot of strength, energy, and intelligence were still needed to win the war and then to win enduring peace. He was eager to devote the rest of his life to this cause.



## The Epilogue

### LITVINOV'S LAST YEARS

In the summer of 1943, the Nazis tried to turn the tables and avenge their defeat at Stalingrad. But in the Battle of the Kursk Salient, the Wehrmacht suffered one more crushing defeat.

The Allies, too, had no choice but to go into action. In January 1943, when Roosevelt and Churchill met in Casablanca, they decided in favour of a landing in Sicily. The matter of a landing in Europe, via the English Channel and thus bringing closer Germany's defeat, was again put off. On July 10, 1943, U.S. troops landed in Sicily, and thereupon in Southern Italy. Mussolini's regime fell. After the decisive advances of the Red Army and the Allied actions in the south of Europe, other Axis countries could be expected to drop out of the war soon. Preparations for a summit meeting, the Teheran Conference, were begun in Moscow, Washington, and London. Diplomats were again stepping to the forefront.

For half a year, Litvinov was still considered ambassador to the United States. Molotov all but ignored him. Sometimes, it is true, when some intricate diplomatic issue arose, he turned to Litvinov for advice, and was always courteous. At other times, however, he was gruff.

Andrei Vyshinsky, who was then Molotov's first deputy, acted in much the same way. He rejected anything Litvinov said, and went out of his way to please Molotov. That, for him, was the main thing. Once, when an important foreign policy issue was being discussed, Vyshinsky set out his opinion. Molotov scowled. Instantly, Vyshinsky changed course and made a proposal contrary to his initial views. Litvinov could not bear that, and observed sharply:

"Listen here, Vyshinsky, you just proposed something entirely different."

Molotov stopped the argument.

Even before the decision was announced, Litvinov realised he was not going back to the United States. On May 23, 1943, he wrote his son Mikhail that he was back in Moscow, though Mother was still in Washington. "Most likely," he wrote, "she has gone to New York,

which she always liked better than the capital. A few of her articles have been published, which she supplied with her own illustrations. She has also put out a book, *Moscow Mystery*, with a long introduction. The book is more successful in the USA than in Britain... I have come on the assumption that I would not be going back to the United States. But I cannot yet say if my guess is right. If I do return, I still intend to see you. Some friend of yours has informed Tania you will be in Moscow on June 4. I am sure that I shall still be here. If necessary, I'll ask your superiors to let you fly here for a few days."

Later in the summer of 1943, Andrei Gromyko was appointed Ambassador to the United States. Litvinov retained his post of Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs. He took part in the discussion of crucial foreign policy issues, headed the commission that drew up the peace treaties, attended examinations at the Higher Diplomatic School, drafted diplomatic notes, and submitted proposals on postwar arrangements. His name was mentioned in reports of diplomatic receptions, and outside official circles people thought he was still one of those who made government decisions.

Shortly before the war ended, Stalin appeared at a reception at the British Embassy. Many Soviet diplomats were there, including Litvinov. Stalin came up to him, said hello amiably and suggested they should drink to their friendship. People held their breaths. Litvinov replied:

"Comrade Stalin, I can't drink—doctor's orders."

"Doesn't matter," Stalin replied. "Let's consider we've had our drink."

On the following day, Litvinov was moved to a bigger office next to Vyshinsky's.

In the summer of 1944, the second front was opened at last. The Second World War entered its final stage. Soviet troops liberated Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary, Austria, Northern Norway, and approached the German border. The enormous Soviet war effort, plus that of the Allies, was paying off at last.

In the early hours of May 9, 1945 Nazi Germany signed the unconditional surrender instrument. The world rejoiced. Moscow saluted the victors. Fireworks lit up the sky. Meanwhile, the aged diplomat thought of the future. On a copy of *Izvestia* carrying the text of the surrender instrument, he wrote: "To Mikhail and Pavel [Litvinov's grandson] and my more distant descendants, in memory of this historic day when the fascists' war-making ability was finally crushed."

What a precise political definition! On that joyful, sunny first day of peace, he was looking far into the future. For the sake of the rising generations, he called for vigilance, and warned that only the war-

making ability of the fascists was crushed, while their destructive spirit and venomous ideology were not yet rooted out.

For nearly another year after the war's end, Litvinov had his job at the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs.

After the terrible ordeal of war, the nation was gradually returning to a peaceful life. Factories were being rebuilt, new housing was going up. Cities, towns, and villages, were rising from their ruins. Litvinov was happy to see it, to hear of fresh successes. In the Donets Basin a feat was being performed: a blown-up furnace was restored, and a new bridge was built across the Dnieper. Blocks of new houses were reported to have been opened to tenancy in Kiev, Smolensk, Velikiye Luki, Minsk, all the cities that the Nazis had practically razed to the ground. Litvinov shared his joy with his friends. His thoughts were concentrated on the country's future, on how to consolidate its international situation on the basis of the prestige it had won during the war.

Litvinov wrote memos to the government, to Stalin, suggesting plans and projects. He drew up a long letter, outlining a plan for a state treaty with Austria, one of Hitler's first victims. Litvinov considered settling the Austrian question a prime objective.

The first postwar elections to the USSR Supreme Soviet were held in February 1946. Litvinov was nominated—not in Leningrad as in the past twenty years, but in the town of Kondopog, Karelia. Litvinov's brief biography was printed there for the electorate. It contained many warm words about his revolutionary, political, and diplomatic activity. "The enemies of the Soviet Union, enemies of peace and progress," it said, "have time and again been exposed to the devastating power of Litvinov's logic, his sarcasm and wit. Comrade Litvinov is an outstanding personality and an old Bolshevik. He enjoys prestige all over the world ... and is working fruitfully to strengthen friendly relations with other countries, to enhance the influence of the Soviet Union on postwar arrangements".

Owing to ill health, Litvinov did not go to Kondopog to meet his electorate. Instead, he sent a letter. It was published in the local paper. He thanked the populace for their trust in him, referred to the immense postwar task facing the country, and ended the letter with the following words: "I promise to devote the rest of my life, as before, to the interests of our country, and to carry out conscientiously, to the full extent of my powers and skill, all the work that the Party and government may entrust me."

On February 10, Litvinov was elected deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. The first time he was elected to the country's

supreme governing body was in December 1922, at the first All-Union Congress of Soviets. The latest election, in 1946, culminated his thirty years as people's deputy.

On July 17, 1946, Maxim Litvinov was 70. Unlike his sixtieth birthday, which he celebrated in Evian, there were no official telegrams or greetings. He was not totally forgotten, however. Dekanosov, who was also Deputy Foreign Commissar, called up and said he had news for him. Their offices were at different ends of the building. Litvinov went up three flights of stairs, and crossed the long corridor to Dekanosov's office. The latter was curt:

"I have been instructed to inform you that you have been relieved of your job."

That was the end of Maxim Litvinov's diplomatic career. But the toast Stalin had offered to drink to their friendship at the British Embassy reception still exercised its magic. Litvinov was told he could be a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences. He refused.

"I have never had anything to do with the Academy of Sciences. I'll not even consider it."

Now he could look back at the past. He never had time for himself. His life was wholly devoted to his job. Litvinov took to reading books. He reread all of Pushkin, then the history of the French Revolution. He read the works of English authors—the novels of Dickens and Thackeray, and Anthony Trollope, and the biographies by André Maurois, out of which he singled out *The Life of Disraeli*. "To attain first place in a country you must be mediocre and unscrupulous," Maurois wrote. Litvinov scribbled on the margin: "Like the British prime ministers."

He was often seen at the Lenin Library. Denied a car the day he was dismissed, he walked there, as he did everywhere else. There was a cab stand near his house in Serafimovich Street, and the same thing happened day after day: the moment Litvinov appeared in the door, cabs drove up, doors opened, and drivers said: "Get in, get in, Maxim Maximovich, and don't bother about paying."

Litvinov thanked them, but always refused.

Word of the concern of the cab drivers got around. Zhdanov gave Dekanosov a piece of his mind, and on the next day Litvinov was offered the use of an official car.

Litvinov was sometimes invited to receptions on big holidays. The last reception he went to was in early 1947. Alexander Werth, prominent British journalist and author of *Russia at War 1941-1945*, wrote: "Perhaps the most diehard 'softy' was Litvinov, who remained one even as late as 1947. I had a conversation with him at the reception given by Molotov on Red Army Day in February 1947... Vyshinsky



walked past, and gave us both an exceedingly dirty look. Litvinov was never to appear at any public reception again. Ivy Litvinov's reckless indiscretions at the same party—remarks made for anybody to hear—added to Molotov's great displeasure."

Litvinov was invited on rare occasions only and only to meetings in celebration of revolutionary jubilees. From time to time, he would speak at the Museum of the Revolution and the Central Lenin Museum, recalling the early revolutionary days, the time he was in prison in Kiev, and his work as an *Iskra* agent. Then they stopped inviting him even on those rare occasions.

But Litvinov was not forgotten. He received letters, and telegrams, people asked him for advice, and sent their good wishes. Here is one such letter:

"Hello, Maxim Maximovich, a very happy New Year to you in 1948, and here's wishing you health and a long life. Pardon me for writing. You do not know me, but I know you well. Fewer and fewer fine men of Lenin's guard, like you, are still around. But our memory of you will never fade. We will never forget the arms you supplied through Finland, the arms that overthrew the Tsar, that repulsed foreign armies. Your inspired speeches at the League of Nations at Geneva helped us win the Great Patriotic War and will help us win the coming battles for communism. Once again, dear Maxim Maximovich, I wish you a happy New Year. Glory and gratitude to the old Leninist guard of Bolsheviks from those it has educated and brought up! Glory to you, old-timer and undergrounder, dedicated revolutionary!"

At the end of his life, too, Litvinov looked for something useful to keep him busy. He spent two years compiling a dictionary of synonyms. One has to see the big box filled with filing cards to understand how much Litvinov had done. When the dictionary was ready, he wrote a publishing house to come and look at it. At first, there was no answer. Then, a long time later, came a rejection: no, they did not want his book, unless he'd accept a co-author, someone known in linguistics.

Then he received a letter asking him to review a Swedish-Russian dictionary. He took the matter seriously, as he did everything else, and, considering his knowledge of Swedish insufficient, refused the offer. On June 16, 1948, he wrote to Alexandra Kollontai:

"Dear Alexandra, I hope you received my previous letter. This one is on business. I have been asked to review a Swedish-Russian dictionary. To my shame, I have had to admit ignorance. Then it occurred to me that perhaps you would do it. What they want is an opinion (not for print; the publishers want to know if it's worth printing). The dictionary was compiled by my former subordinate, Milanova.

I think the publishers would be happy if you also agreed to edit the dictionary."

Litvinov's correspondence with Kollontai became livelier. They found joy in communicating with each other. The flow of letters ended only after Litvinov's death.

Alexandra Kollontai was then busy writing her notes. She usually let Litvinov see what she had written. He was her first critic, offered advice, and sometimes disagreed with what she wrote. On June 23, 1949, he commented:

"My condolences over the inconsiderate weather, so unpleasant to us urbanites. Have returned all your notes. While refraining from praise, as you asked me, I must say I read your notes with great interest. I felt for you when you wrestled with all the herring, cod, and seal, of which you wrote alongside your poetic descriptions of the beauty of nature. Certainly, you are in love with Norway. I have always been sorry, and am still sorrier now, that Norway never came within the range of my many excursions across Europe. Every summer, I meant to go there but never managed. What to do? Each of us is fated to die without having performed or completed something. Oh, how many forgotten episodes and faces have your notes revived in my memory! Thank you very much. Need I say I will be grateful for anything more of the same kind. Shaking your hand, wishing you health and good weather in July. Yours, Litvinov."

In the summer of 1949, Litvinov went to the Baltic shore near Riga, hoping to cure his neglected rheumatism which he had acquired during his prison years. Here he saw familiar places again. He had shipped arms to Russia via Latvia, he had had secret rendezvous here and had kept transit warehouses in Riga, and it was also via Riga that he had received letters from Lenin and Krupskaya.

In Kemer, the holiday resort, Litvinov met Maisky and Chicherin's former assistant, Korotkin. Often, they walked together along the shore. One evening, shortly before sunset, sitting on a bench near the sea, they talked of bygone days. Litvinov replied curtly to the questions of his companions. Then, a smile lit up his face. He said:

"I knew Chicherin since 1904. After the disaster with the boat *Zora*, he got the Party's Central Committee to investigate the reasons for the mishap. He wanted me to answer for it. A commission was formed, and Chicherin came specially from Paris to Brussels, where it had its seat. I was found innocent of anything irregular. He went back to Paris, and we did not see each other until he came to London. He was a tremendous personality. Peculiar and unique."

Litvinov's smile did not fade. He sat silently for a while thinking of those distant times.

In Riga and Kemer people recognised Litvinov, and stopped him in the street. He wrote to Kollontai on August 2, 1949: "I am writing to you, though I do not know where you are—in Moscow or Chkalovskaya. I hope that despite the poor summer you are better and have benefited from your stay in the country. As in Moscow, I've had to kick up a row before they'd let me have mud treatments, because most doctors say I must not have them. But now my battle for mud has been won. Not that it has done me any good. So far, no improvement. People console me, saying the effects may come after a while, when I'm back in Moscow. So I summon up all my optimism. No other choice... Apart from the mud, I must say it has done me good to be here. The service is excellent. I feel great. The air is fine, the company is good, so are the films and other entertainment. No man could wish for more..."

The days and weeks dragged on slowly. No longer did Litvinov, approach anyone with recommendations on foreign policy. He knew that, at best, he would be regarded as a crank. The diplomat in him was silent. Only from time to time in the company of close friends, in his conversations with Kollontai, would he voice his ideas or say what he would have done in such and such a case. Alexandra Kollontai listened, marvelling at his clear thinking, his far-sightedness, his knack of getting to the root of the problem and anticipating the course of events.

The short notes taken by Alexandra Kollontai's secretary and friend, Emy Lorenson, give us a glimpse of what troubled those two old Soviet diplomats. Here is a note made on July 8, 1950:

"Today, Maxim Litvinov came for a visit. He came for tea. He was deeply concerned over the situation in Germany, and to a less extent over Israel and Yugoslavia."

But whatever he said did not go further than the walls of Kollontai's flat in Bolshaya Kaluzhskaya. The last thread between Litvinov and the diplomatic service was cut when his name was transferred from the Party register of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the register of the house management at his place of residence. It was more than 50 years since he had joined the Party. No one celebrated the jubilee. They forgot. But he did not forget his duties, always attended Party meetings, and was never late. He simply did not know how to come late. The house management's Party group discussed repairs, the plumbing, and the like, and the lift that was so often in disrepair. Litvinov listened and sometimes spoke.

Time had not changed his character. A campaign was launched in those days against so-called cosmopolites. This had an immediate

effect on the outward appearance of Alexandra Kollontai's flat. She had portraits of Swedish King Gustaf Adolf and Prince Eugen which they had given her, and a portrait of the Danish prince who had once come to Moscow on business. She had gifts and souvenirs of all kinds. But when the press attacked "worship of foreign things", Kollontai removed the portraits, and put away all her foreign-made gimmicks. Naturally, Litvinov noticed. And said what he thought of it.

The incident threw a cloud over the friendship of these two remarkable old revolutionaries. But they kept seeing each other, and continued their correspondence. In a letter from a sanatorium in Barvikha, near Moscow, Litvinov wrote to Kollontai:

"After our latest telephone conversation, I got your letter and was happy to know you still worked on your archives. My speeches are available in two editions—an abridged one and an additional one which, as far as I remember, had the title, *In Defence of Peace*. When I go back to town, I'll let you know what it really is. I think I still have a copy. If you need it urgently, you'll no doubt find a copy at the Foreign Ministry library. I feel fine. Not because of the company, but thanks to the vegetation and the fresh air. I walk a lot, but less than I used to. My legs are not up to it. It is a pity you are not here. I had good luck with the room—it has a telephone and a radio receiver, which helps me follow the follies committed across the world."

Litvinov was now over 70. People marvelled at his lucid mind, his insight. Kollontai kept sending him her notes. Nothing escaped his vision, even the least departure from the truth of history. On January 29, 1951, Litvinov commented on her notes on the history of Europe between the two world wars: "I want to call your attention to one inadvertent error. You write of a French 'revanchism'. Yet you refer to the postwar period when French revanchism had long since been satisfied by the return of Alsace-Lorraine to France (I have ticked the place off with a pencil)..."

He made many other remarks—incisive, reaching down to the root of the matter. He offered advice, recollected historical facts, urged analytical conclusions, and insisted on Marxist interpretations of world processes.

Alexandra Kollontai often told Litvinov he should write his memoirs. She held that Litvinov's revolutionary and diplomatic activity was important for future generations, for their education. Many other comrades, too, asked him to write his memoirs. He made no reply or would say briefly that he was not in the custom of writing.

In the summer of 1950, an old friend of his, Andrew Rothstein, came to Moscow from London. A short while before, the second postwar Labour government had come to power in Britain with a



slight edge in the elections. Litvinov asked his guest about the situation in England and about the mood of the English intelligentsia.

"Why aren't you writing your memoirs?" Rothstein asked.

And again Litvinov replied curtly:

"This is not the time to write memoirs."

On November 16, 1950, Litvinov received a letter from Alexander Tvardovsky, who was then acting secretary of the Union of Writers. Tvardovsky asked him to come to a function marking the 50th anniversary of the first issue of Lenin's *Iskra*. "Your remembrances on this auspicious occasion," wrote Tvardovsky, "would be most welcome and valuable."

Litvinov did go to see Tvardovsky...

This inspired Kollontai. Late in December 1950 she again asked Litvinov to write his memoirs. On January 18, 1951, Litvinov replied: "Dear Alexandra, alas I have lost the art of writing (physically), because ever since the Revolution I had written nothing in my own hand, and always had a stenographer. Now I have none. That is one reason why I cannot do what you ask, to say nothing of more serious reasons..."

To one very close friend, Litvinov said:

"I write in the morning, and tear it up in the evening."

He left us no memoirs. Shortly before his death, he wrote a few letters to his granddaughter, telling her in allegorical form how one should live; he spoke of the meaning of life, of justice and honesty. In one of his last letters to her, he wrote: "I don't care if mercenary historians ignore me, and strike out my name..." But at the end of the letter he wrote that he hoped the time would come when people remembered him.

Always Litvinov addressed the works of Lenin. During the last few years of his life this was an organic need. He read everything that was written about Lenin, and observed bitterly that much too little was written. Yet his interest in Lenin was enormous. Early in the summer of 1951, Kollontai sent Litvinov Nadezhda Krupskaya's<sup>67</sup> book of remembrances of Lenin, which he had not been able to obtain in the library. On July 2, he wrote to her:

"Dear Alexandra, I return Krupskaya's remembrances with gratitude. I read the book, or rather reread it, in one gulp. How many pictures from my own past did it conjure up! What compassion Lenin's feelings and experiences arouse! How human he was. It is a pity, however, that Krupskaya confined herself to such sporadic, trivial, and incomplete remembrances. Considering her closeness to Lenin and her function as his perpetual secretary, one could expect a more complete and more thorough description of the epoch. Who if not Krupskaya

should write the history of the Party. But, all in all, thanks for this book, a most valuable contribution the history of the Party and of our country. It is a pity that our young people have no access to it. They know so little about Lenin. It is a pity, too, that there is no continuation."

In July 1951, Litvinov was seventy-five. Only his closest friends remembered it was his birthday. They congratulated him, and wished him health. Litvinov looked fit, and showed an interest in world affairs. Anatoly Miller, a doctor of history, wrote:

"I met Maxim Litvinov at the time near Zvenigorod in the country-house of Academician Maisky. I was about to visit Borodino, to see the battlefield and the museum. Litvinov said he, too, would like to go. All of us set out for Borodino in my car. As we alighted, someone offered Litvinov a hand. He said, I'm not a wreck yet. My sciatica is the only thing that bothers me. I have no other complaints. He offered his hand to the lady in the car, and helped her alight.

"As we were walking across the field of Borodino, my wife asked Litvinov, 'I'm sure, Maxim Maximovich, that you are writing your memoirs. Aren't you?'

"Litvinov smiled sarcastically and replied, 'I'm no madman to be writing memoirs.'"

In the latter half of 1951, Litvinov was unwell. He did not leave the house. But Dr. Krause, who had predicted his early death back in the beginning of the 1930s, had been badly mistaken. Litvinov's powerful constitution coped with his illness well in his seventies. But gradually his heart grew weaker. Now his correspondence with Alexandra Kollontai was more like an exchange of letters with a doctor: full of advice and medical prescriptions. Then, suddenly, would come a question: what do you think will happen to Korea? Followed by his thoughts, conclusions, and predictions. Whenever he felt better he read his favourite poets or the history of the French Revolution or Lenin's latest writings. It was in Lenin's works that he looked for an answer to the many questions that troubled him.

In December 1951, Maxim Litvinov had his third stroke. The doctors made him stay in bed. He tried getting up or begged for books to read. If his request was refused, he lay in silence thinking or listening to the radio. The radio set was on the little table beside his bed.

He shared his thoughts with no one. What he thought in those long hours will never be known. Two years before he had written to Stalin. He had written what was on his mind. Not about himself. He had no complaints. He wrote of the country's future, and set forth his ideas of what the Soviet Union's foreign policy should be.

What had troubled him in those last few years of his life?

The atomic mushroom over Hiroshima, that first step towards worldwide disaster had stunned the world. An experienced diplomat and statesman, Litvinov saw the cloudy future. He devised outline plans that might halt the drift to the abyss. He who had paved the way for rapprochement with the people of the United States, knew how all-important it was to strengthen mutual confidence between the two great nations. Again and again, his thoughts turned to the last meeting he had had with President Roosevelt on that April night of 1943.

At the end of his letter to Stalin he had added two lines of concern for his family: "Please, don't leave my wife and children in trouble."

Some time after his death, Misha and Tanya, his son and daughter, would add another two lines to it: "We're not in want. We hadn't been independent when Father wrote you, now we have professions, and work for our living."

At the end of December, Litvinov's condition deteriorated. Four-year-old Vera, his granddaughter, came to his bedside. Litvinov took her in his arms and kissed her. Lydia Fotiyeva, who saw it, said, "He killed himself."

On December 31, the nurse did not leave his bedside. He was dying. His last words were: "Let it be quick..."

Litvinov's funeral was on January 4, 1952. A short obituary had appeared in *Pravda*. The coffin with the deceased, it said, was installed in the conference hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for people to come and see him off. It was a cold day. People came with flowers, but at the entrance someone said no flowers, please. A wreath from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was all. Old Bolsheviks who had known Litvinov all their lives, had also collected money for a wreath. But someone in plain clothes, appeared and said, "It is thought there should be no wreath from Old Bolsheviks."

A crowd of people gathered outside Novodevichy Cemetery. But its gate was closed. A passer-by asked, "Who has died?"

Not until sixteen years later, in 1967, was a granite stele with Litvinov's portrait in bas relief erected beside his grave. The sculptor portrayed him well—his mild features and incisive gaze turned to the future. And it took another twenty years for the USSR Council of Ministers to have a memorial plaque placed on the wall of the house near Krasniye Vorota where People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Maxim Maximovich Litvinov had lived for some years. This was on December 22, 1987, the year when the country celebrated the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution in a setting of perestroika and glasnost.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Bolsheviks (from *bolsinstvo* meaning majority), political party that took shape in 1903 (at the Second Congress of the RSDLP) as a result of efforts by Russian revolutionary Marxists headed by V. I. Lenin to create a genuinely revolutionary party.

<sup>2</sup> Mensheviks (from *mensinstvo*, meaning minority), an opportunist petty-bourgeois reformist current in Russia's Social-Democratic movement, which emerged at the Second Congress of the RSDLP in 1903, consisting of the opponents of the Leninist principle of building a party of a new type, who were in the minority in the elections to the Party's central bodies.

<sup>3</sup> Mikoyan, Anastas (1895-1978), for many years member of the CPSU Central Committee's Political Bureau, First Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers, Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium in 1965-1974.

<sup>4</sup> Molotov, Vyacheslav (1890-1986), Chairman of the USSR Council of People's Commissars in 1930-1941, and USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1939-1949 and 1953-1956.

<sup>5</sup> *Iskra*, the first all-Russian underground Marxist newspaper founded by V. I. Lenin and published under his direction. After the Second Congress of the RSDLP it became an organ of the Mensheviks. The last, 112th issue, appeared in October 1905.

<sup>6</sup> Khodynka—the reference to the rioting in Khodynka Field (in the north-western part of Moscow) on May 18, 1896, during the celebration of the coronation of Tsar Nicholas II and the distribution of gifts to the populace. Owing to official neglect as many as 1,389 people died and about 1,300 were maimed in the ensuing stampede.

<sup>7</sup> Perovskaya, Sofia (1853-1881), revolutionary, member of the Executive of Narodnaya Volya (People's Freedom), a revolutionary Narodnik organisation founded in St. Petersburg in 1879. Its programme was to eliminate autocracy, convene a Constituent Assembly, introduce democratic freedoms, and give the land to its tillers. She organised and took part in an attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II, and was executed by hanging in St. Petersburg in April 1881.

<sup>8</sup> Zhelyabov, Andrei (1851-1881), a revolutionary Narodnik from a family



of serf peasants. A founder and leader of the Narodnaya Volya organisation. Masterminded the attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II. Executed by hanging in St. Petersburg together with Sofia Perovskaya.

<sup>9</sup> Bund—a Jewish workers' league active in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia. A petty-bourgeois political party founded in Wilno (now Vilnius, capital of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic) in 1897. Dissolved itself in 1921. Some members of the Bund were admitted to the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

<sup>10</sup> Raskolniks—official name of the Old Believers sect in Russia.

<sup>11</sup> Black Hundreds—monarchist terrorist groups founded with the backing of the tsarist police to terrorise the revolutionary movement in 1905-1907. Organised anti-Jewish pogroms.

<sup>12</sup> The First Congress of the RSDLP was held underground in Minsk in March 1898. Issued the Manifesto of the RSDLP proclaiming the foundation of the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

<sup>13</sup> The Second Congress of the RSDLP (July-August 1903), convened in Brussels, then moved to London. It adopted the Party's Programme and Rules. During the discussion the congress broke up into a revolutionary and an opportunist segment of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks.

<sup>14</sup> Bonch-Bruyevich, Vladimir (1873-1955), Soviet Party leader and statesman. In charge of the chancellery of the Council of People's Commissars from 1917 to 1920.

<sup>15</sup> Conference of 22 Bolsheviks (July-August 1904), held near Geneva, started unifying Party branches adhering to Lenin's platform.

<sup>16</sup> Bogdanov, Alexander (1873-1928), active in the Russian revolutionary movement, a medical doctor, philosopher, economist, writer of utopian novels. Organiser and director of Moscow's Blood Transfusion Institute. Died as a result of a transfusion experiment on himself.

<sup>17</sup> Zemlyachka, Rosalia (1876-1947), professional revolutionary, Soviet stateswoman and Party functionary, deputy chairperson of the USSR Council of People's Commissars from 1939 to 1943.

<sup>18</sup> Vorovsky, Vaclav (1871-1923), active in the Russian revolutionary movement, man of letters. After the October Revolution, a diplomat. Murdered by whiteguard counter-revolutionary Konradi in Lausanne on May 10, 1923.

<sup>19</sup> Lunacharsky, Anatoly (1875-1933), professional revolutionary, writer, active in the field of Soviet culture, diplomat, People's Commissar of Education.

<sup>20</sup> Olminsky, Mikhail (1863-1933), active in the Russian revolutionary movement, historian.

<sup>21</sup> Bloody Sunday (January 9, 1905), that day tsarist troops opened fire on a peaceful procession of St. Petersburg workers taking a petition to the Tsar. More than a thousand were killed, 2,000 wounded. Precipitated the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907.

<sup>22</sup> Pyatnitsky (Tarshis), Osip (1882-1938), active in the Russian and international revolutionary movement, a leader of the October 1917 armed uprising in Moscow, member of the Operational Party Centre.

<sup>23</sup> Krasin, Leonid (1870-1926), Soviet statesman and Party functionary. Engineer, *Iskra* agent, member of the RSDLP Central Committee from 1903 to

1907. After the October Revolution he was a member of the Supreme Economic Council Presidium, People's Commissar for Trade and Industry, People's Commissar of Communications, People's Commissar for Foreign Trade, envoy in Britain, then in France.

<sup>24</sup> Socialist-Revolutionary Party—a left-wing bourgeois-democratic party in Russia from 1901 to 1923. Represented the urban and rural petty bourgeoisie. After the October Revolution, the Socialist-Revolutionaries organised anti-Soviet rebellions.

<sup>25</sup> Janis Lacis, member of the Riga RSDLP Committee, in whose carpenter's shop bombs were found by the police, and Julius Schlessler, a factory worker, were freed through an attack on the local prison.

Mark (R.M. Semyonchikov-Zakharov), member of the Moscow League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, born on September 27, 1877, in the village of Kalikino, near Vladimir, to a peasant family, served in the 21st Murmansk Infantry Regiment, came to Riga secretly and was co-opted to the Riga RSDLP Committee. Worked with Maxim Litvinov. In May 1905, Semyonchikov was seized in the street, sentenced to 20 years' hard labour, and died in prison.

<sup>26</sup> Andreyeva, Maria (1868-1953), Russian actress, joined the Party in 1904. One of the founders of the Bolshoi Drama Theatre in Petrograd in 1919. She was Petrograd Commissar of Theatres and Public Spectacles. Carried out assignments of the Party's Central Committee and of V. I. Lenin.

<sup>27</sup> Kamo (Ter-Petrosyan), Simon (1882-1922), active in the Russian revolutionary movement, known for his phenomenal bravery, organiser of "expropriations" of funds from capitalist banks for the needs of the Revolution.

<sup>28</sup> Liquidators, an opportunist current in the RSDLP, the right wing of Menshevism, surfaced in 1907. Campaigned for the dissolution (liquidation) of the underground revolutionary party.

<sup>29</sup> Chkheidze, Nikolai (1864-1926), a Menshevik leader. Deputy of the 3rd and 4th State Dumas (parliaments in tsarist Russia after the 1905 revolution). From 1921 on, he was a white emigré.

<sup>30</sup> Chkhenkeli, Akaky (1874-1959), a leader of the Georgian Mensheviks. Deputy of the 4th State Duma. From 1921 on, he was a white emigré.

<sup>31</sup> Rubanovich, Ilya (1860-1920), member of the Narodnik movement in Russia, later active as a Socialist-Revolutionary.

<sup>32</sup> Semkovsky, Semyon (1882-?), with the *Iskra* from 1901, then a Menshevik. In the early 1930s he was a professor, and taught in higher educational establishments in the Ukraine.

<sup>33</sup> The Prague Conference of the RSDLP charted Party building in Russia and the Party's tactics in the new revolutionary upswing. Elected a Bolshevik Central Committee with Lenin at its head.

<sup>34</sup> Zagorsky, Vladimir (1883-1919), active in the Russian revolutionary movement, Party functionary. Participated in the Moscow uprising of December 1905. Left the country in 1908. After the October Revolution he was first secretary of the first Soviet embassy abroad (in Germany). In July 1918, he was elected Secretary of the Party's Moscow Committee. Assassinated by Left Socialist-Revolutionaries.

<sup>35</sup> Kamenev, Lev (1883-1937), professional revolutionary, Party functionary, and statesman. Was Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars from 1922. One of the organisers of the opposition.

<sup>36</sup> Shlyapnikov, Alexander (1884-1937?), professional revolutionary, factory worker, repeatedly imprisoned in tsarist times. Was People's Commissar for Labour after the October Revolution. From 1920 to 1922 he headed the so-called Workers' Opposition, a factional anarcho-syndicalist group in the Communist Party. Condemned by the Party, the group disintegrated.

<sup>37</sup> Kollontai, Alexandra (1872-1952), daughter of a tsarist general, professional revolutionary, member of Lenin's first government after the October Revolution. First woman ambassador and diplomat in world history.

<sup>38</sup> Kossuth, Lajos (1802-1894), organiser and leader of the Hungarian independence movement in the 1848 revolution. Initiated the founding of a Hungarian national army to make war on the Austrian Hapsburgs.

<sup>39</sup> Antonov-Ovseyenko, Vladimir (1883-1939), Russian professional revolutionary, Soviet statesman and diplomat. During the October Revolution he was Secretary of the Petrograd Revolutionary Military Committee. Led the storming of the Winter Palace.

<sup>40</sup> Taratuta, Victor (1881-1926), active in the Russian revolutionary movement, participant in the Moscow armed uprising of December 1905. From 1919 on he was active in the country's economy in different capacities.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Rothstein, an organiser of the Hands Off Russia committees, has for many years now been President of the British-Soviet Friendship Society. In 1983, the Soviet government decorated him with the Order of the October Revolution for his meritorious contributions to the struggle for peace and social progress.

Andrew Rothstein is the son of Fyodor Rothstein (1871-1953), Soviet historian and diplomat, member of the CPSU from 1901, a political emigré in Britain from 1890 to 1920 and one of the founders of the Communist Party of Great Britain.

<sup>42</sup> Protopopov, Alexander (1866-1918), Minister of Internal Affairs from 1916 to February 1917. Tried to suppress the bourgeois-democratic 1917 February revolution with resort to arms. Later condemned by the Cheka.

<sup>43</sup> Kolchak, Alexander (1874-1920), tsarist admiral, an organiser of the counter-revolution during the Civil War. In 1918 he proclaimed himself Supreme Ruler of the Russian State. Executed by a firing squad for crimes against the people by a decision of the Revolutionary Military Committee of Irkutsk.

<sup>44</sup> Tsyurupa, Alexander (1870-1928), Soviet statesman and Party functionary; People's Commissar for Food after the October Revolution, then Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of People's Commissars.

<sup>45</sup> Denikin, Anton (1872-1947), tsarist lieutenant-general, one of the masterminds of the counter-revolution in the Civil War. Fled the country after the collapse of the whiteguard armies in 1920.

<sup>46</sup> Yudenich, Nikolai (1862-1933), tsarist general, one of the organisers of the counter-revolution in the Civil War. Fled the country after the failure of his march on revolutionary Petrograd in 1919.

<sup>47</sup> Frunze, Mikhail (1885-1925), Soviet statesman, Party functionary, military strategist. Played an outstanding part in the Civil War. People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs in 1924 and 1925.

<sup>48</sup> Wrangel, Pyotr (1878-1928), baron, tsarist lieutenant-general, commander (after Denikin) of the so-called Volunteer Army wiped out by the Red Army in the south of Russia. Fled abroad in 1920.

<sup>49</sup> Dzerzhinsky, Felix (1877-1926), Soviet Party functionary and statesman, a leader of the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907 in Warsaw. Held high office as Chairman of the Cheka (Extraordinary Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution and Sabotage), People's Commissar for Communications, Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council of the USSR. Organised the salvation of children orphaned or left homeless after the First World War and the Civil War.

<sup>50</sup> Nogin, Victor (1878-1924), Soviet statesman and Party functionary. People's Commissar for Trade and Industry after the October Revolution.

<sup>51</sup> Rykov, Alexei (1881-1938), a leading Party functionary and professional revolutionary. Was chairman of the USSR Council of People's Commissars from 1924 to 1930. Victim of the Stalin personality cult.

<sup>52</sup> Skliansky, Ephraim (1892-1925), Soviet statesman, Party functionary, military officer. Participant in the October 1917 armed uprising in Petrograd. Was Deputy People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs during the Civil War. Drowned when on a mission in the United States.

<sup>53</sup> Kronstadt mutiny, an anti-Soviet mutiny in Kronstadt (February 28-March 18, 1921) incited by Socialist-Revolutionaries and anarchists connected with whiteguard counter-revolutionaries and foreign interventionists. Put down by Red Army units with the participation of the delegates to the 10th Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks).

<sup>54</sup> Otzovists, a factional group of former Bolsheviks that surfaced in 1908. Demanded the recall of deputies from the State Duma, and halting Party work in legal organisations, which would fence off the RSDLP from the masses.

<sup>55</sup> Rudzutak, Jan (1888-1938), Soviet statesman and Party functionary, prominent in building the Soviet state, was Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of People's Commissars, and member of the Party Central Committee's Political Bureau. A victim of the Stalin personality cult.

<sup>56</sup> Joffe, Adolf (1883-1927), Soviet statesman, Party functionary, diplomat. Ambassador in Berlin in 1918. After the Genoa Conference he was ambassador in China, then in Austria.

<sup>57</sup> Armand, Inessa (1874-1920), active in the Bolshevik Party and the international communist movement. Took part in the first Russian revolution of 1905-1907. Left tsarist Russia as a political emigré. Returned after the 1917 February revolution. Headed the Women Workers' Department of the Party's Central Committee from 1918 on.

<sup>58</sup> Kalinin, Mikhail (1875-1946), member of the St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Was Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium from 1919 to 1946.

<sup>59</sup> Kuibyshev, Valerian (1888-1935), professional revolutionary, Soviet statesman and Party functionary. Was Chairman of the USSR Planning Committee.



tee and First Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars in the 1930s.

<sup>60</sup> Budyonny, Semyon (1883-1973), Civil War hero and Marshal of the Soviet Union. Was in command of troops during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945.

<sup>61</sup> Voroshilov, Kliment (1881-1969), People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs (Commissar for Defence) from 1925 to 1940. Was in command of troops during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945.

<sup>62</sup> Malenkov, Georgy (1902-1988), Soviet statesman. Member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Party's Central Committee. Was expelled from the CPSU and dismissed from office for gross political errors, including violations of legality.

<sup>63</sup> Beria, Lavrenty (1899-1953), political criminal who held various Party and government offices under Stalin's protection. Sentenced to death by the Military Tribunal and executed by a firing squad.

<sup>64</sup> Raskolnikov, Fyodor (1892-1939), professional revolutionary, prominent in the October Revolution and the ensuing Civil War. Writer and diplomat. Exposed Stalin's repression policy.

<sup>65</sup> Zhdanov, Andrei (1896-1948), was member of the Political Bureau and Secretary of the Party's Central Committee.

<sup>66</sup> Vyshinsky, Andrei (1883-1954), jurist and diplomat. One of the chief agents in the unlawful show trials during the Stalin personality cult period.

<sup>67</sup> Krupskaya, Nadezhda (1896-1939), wife, friend, and companion of V. I. Lenin; professional revolutionary, educator, author of works on education.

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